

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Abiding in Jesus' Love

by Dan Trygg

"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. ⁸ ...By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and come to be My disciples. ⁹ Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ If ever 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, that My joy may be in you, and your joy may be made full. ¹² This is My commandment in order that you might 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, in order that you might go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you."

John 15:5,8-16

You might ask, "What was Jesus' death and resurrection all about? What does it mean to me, day to day?" Throughout the scriptures, from the time of the fall, **God has been looking to secure for Himself a people who will be loyal to Him.** He prepared the way, prophesying and promising His plan to bring salvation to all people who would choose to respond to Him. **It is important to see that this is not just about *saving* people, ...it is about *calling out and liberating* those who are willing to *follow* Him!** He has shown us a wonderful, gracious love, ...an *agapē-love*, a benevolent purpose to benefit humankind, even though they had done nothing to earn it. **He demonstrated this love when we were distant from Him, at odds with Him, ignorant of Him, and wanting nothing to do with Him.** We were self-seeking, living for pride and pleasure. We were "children of wrath", in that our lives were displeasing to Him. Nevertheless, **He saved us, not because of deeds we had done in righteousness, but purely out of His mercy.** His love drew Him to come to dwell among us as a human being, and pay the price for our redemption. **For those who respond to His grace, He washes us with the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, and begins a process of renewing us to make us like Him.** That is the ultimate goal, to make us like Him, ...**He desires to mold and shape our hearts to become vessels that can contain and express His life and His love.** Jesus speaks of this great purpose in this passage in John 15.

He is the Vine, ...He is our *Life-source*. We are to *abide* in Him, ...*live* in Him, ...*stay* in Him, ...*get our life from Him*. If we do *that*, we will *bear much fruit* (vs. 5). **He called us and set us about the business of bearing fruit.** What *kind* of fruit? **The fruit of His life expressed through us.** "...fruit that will remain."

"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love" (vs. 9). -- The Greek for "love" is *agapāō* here. Jesus' love for them had been like the love that the Father had for Him. In 3:34,35, the Father's *agapē-love* caused Him to give Jesus *everything* into His hand. In a similar way, **Jesus's love will give to us everything we need.** This will come to us as we remain in this place of intimacy, openness, and benevolent *agapē* with Christ.

"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love" (vs. 10). -- The concept is this: Whenever they would be obedient, they *will* in fact *be abiding in His love*. This could be interpreted in two ways: Either Jesus is saying, "Your obedience will *earn* My love", or **He is saying "Obedience is the way to *continue* to experience the intimacy and love that are already directed toward you"**. The first is a "do-in-order-to-get" scenario, the second is a "do-in-order-to-enjoy-and-continue-in-what-is-already-yours" idea. The first explanation would *imply* that Jesus *will withhold His love* if we don't perform. The second implies that **we might wander away from the experience of His love if we don't pay attention and walk responsively with Him.** His love toward us is secure and unquestionable. **It is our experience of it that is the concern.** The entire context, and especially the use of the word "abide" strongly favors the second interpretation. Also, the fact that Jesus used a form of the verb for "keep, obey" that *emphasizes a point-of-time decision* would seem to argue that *He is describing a choice* to obey that confirms the experience of being "in tune with" Him. "...just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love" -- **Jesus is calling them to live in relation to Him as He has lived in relation to the Father.** This also clarifies the first clause. **Jesus never had to earn the Father's love.** His obedient choices enabled Him to experientially dwell in it, however.

"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy might be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (vs. 11). - This statement makes clear that **Jesus is describing "abiding in His love" as a joyful, positive experience, not as some "walking-on-eggshells" relationship** where fear of rejection always hovers. **No, it is not about the danger of falling out of God's favor. It is about maximizing joy!** It is the joy that Jesus experienced and lived by that He is attempting to introduce to us. **His desires nothing less than that we "be filled" with it.** Cf. Nehemiah 8:10.

“This is My commandment, that you love one another” (vs. 12). -- **Do you want to live in and experience the love of Jesus? Then love one another.** You will come to experience the love of Christ being expressed through you to others, and you will also be loved by Christ through others in return. *“...just as I have loved you.”* -- Again, **this passage is very plainly not about getting or earning Christ’s love.** The Greek here is a past, completed action. He points to the love He has *already* expressed to them as the example for their love for one another.

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (Vs. 13). -- The Greek for “friends” are “the-ones-he-likes-or-enjoys” (*phileōn*, from the other word for love, *phileō*). John writes in I Jn. 4:9, “By this the love (agapē) of God was manifested to us, that God has sent His unique Son into the world so that we might live through Him.” Paul tells us that “one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ... For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:7,8,10). **God’s agapē love goes *beyond* even the love Jesus says is the “greater love”. He was willing to lay down His life for His enemies, not just His friends. How much more is His willingness to give of Himself toward those *who love Him in return*?**

“You are My friends, if you do what I command you” (vs. 14). -- This is not some childish, self-centered demand, “If you want to be my friend then you have to do what I say”. **Because Jesus is the King, the Christ, He must be obeyed. To function as a friend, to “be” a friend to Him, requires that we recognize His authority and follow His directives.** To disobey Him is to function as one serving the enemy. This is not the nature of *all* relationships, but it *is* the nature of a relationship with Jesus. We are not two equals having a casual interaction. He is the King. To be His friend demands that we recognize and value His authority.

“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 I have heard from My Father I have made known to you” (vs. 15). -- **Even though a relationship with Jesus as King demands respect and obedience, He does not see us as simply slaves,** at His beck and call. Slaves are just told what to do. They are not privy to relationship, or intimate sharing with their master. There is no expectation that they need to know what their master’s thoughts, values, or plans are. There is no expectation that a close friendship might develop between slave and master. Jesus uses this well-known social relationship to point out that His disciples are *not* simply performers for Him, ...pawns to do His will. **He *does* value them as friends, and shares with them His intimate thoughts and counsel** (cf. Prov. 3:32; Psa. 25:14).

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you” (vs. 16). -- Certainly, this was true about the disciples’ relationship with Jesus. They were with Him, because He had selected them, picked them out of a larger group of followers for a specific task (Lk. 6:13; Jn. 6:70; 13:18; Acts 1:2). Jesus’ point here is to again emphasize what this relationship is all about. They are *not* equals, just “hanging around” together. **By His initiative, they were selected to accompany Him, and to be trained by Him.** Obviously, they also had come along voluntarily, and in that sense they *chose* to be there. (It wasn’t some kind of “hypnotic mind control”.) Their desire to be one of His inner disciples was not sufficient in itself, however. That prerogative belonged to Jesus. *“...and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit”* – As we saw, the word translated as “appointed” most commonly means “placed” or “put”. In a context like this, however, the word means either “I put you (in a place)” or “I put you (to work, or be about a task)”. Cf. Acts 20:28; I Tim. 1:12; 2:7. Again, **the clear message is that Jesus is in control. He is the one who assigned them to their place or task.** The word “put” or “place” is also a form of the same word He used in vs. 13, “he might lay down/place/put his life...” (cf. I Jn. 3:16). “That” means “in order that”, a purpose clause in Greek. **The purpose was that they might go away (or go about their business) and produce fruit apart from His physical presence, but supported by His life.** *“...and that your fruit should remain”* -- Jesus is looking for fruit that will endure, eternal fruit. The word “remain” is the same as “abide”, hence, that their fruit might “live in, continue in, remain, or endure”. *“...that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you”* -- The word “that” designates another purpose clause in Greek. He chose and appointed them... **“in order that** what anything ever you might ask (at a point in time) of the Father in My name, He may give to you”. This restates the theme, from 14:13; & 15:7, regarding effectual prayer. **Asking in His name means to ask on His authority, in response to His instructions. Christ had given them His authority to accomplish the tasks He had appointed them to do.**

“This I command you, that you love one another (vs. 17). -- **Literally, “these (things) I command you”, referring to the entire previous context of abiding and obeying, not to the phrase that follows. He is not here commanding them to love, but to abide in Him and in His love.** The purpose of this was “in order that you might love one another”. **Abiding in Jesus will produce the love,** because it is the tenor of His heart. **We love because He first loved us** (I Jn. 4:19). **This was the purpose for His coming: to call out a people for Himself, ...a people who will come to Him, follow Him, partake of Him, abide in Him, become like Him, and bear fruit for Him.**