

**To Exalt Christ;
To Equip, Encourage, Exhort, Edify God's Elect**

**Preparing For Departure: Called to Remain
John 15:1-17**

In John 13 Jesus began to prepare his disciples for his departure by setting before them an example of what it means to serve by washing their feet. He however would go on to set the supreme example of one called to serve by being our ransom, the substitute for our sin. I.e. to die in our place.

In John 14 Jesus told them not to be troubled but to trust in God and in him. Jesus prepared his disciples for his departure by a covenant promise of preparing a place for them in the place where he was going. He also disclosed to them that he was the way to that place and also the truth and the life and therefore exclusively the way to God. They were called to trust.

This morning in John 15:1-17, Jesus further prepares them for departure by them being called to remain in him. This follows on from John 14 and him being the only way, the only truth and the only life. He will unabashedly say to them in verse 5 of our text this morning that, *“apart from me you can do nothing.”* Therefore so they can do something they are called to remain in him. Remain is therefore our first heading.

Remain – John 15:1-8

Jesus begins by identifying himself as the true vine and his Father as the gardener. Branches that bear no fruit God cuts off, but those who bear fruit he prunes so they will produce more fruit. Verse 4 sets the tone – Jesus said – *“Remain in me and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”* It is a conditional command. If you remain in him then he will remain in you and you will bear fruit.

He repeats the word, ‘remain’ 6 times indicating that to remain in him is vitally important. In Greek the word, ‘remain’ means, *“to stay, to continue, to endure.”* Why should they/we remain in him? **First** he told them, *“I am the true vine....”* The synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke all record the Last Supper. There Jesus referred to his blood being poured out like wine. E.g. in Matthew 26:28 Jesus took the cup of wine and said, *“This is my blood of the*

covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Wine is the product of the vine. Forgiveness of sins is the product of him being the true vine. He was the **true** vine because his blood truly, effectively accomplished the forgiveness of sins, therefore remain in him.

Second, they should remain in him because if they do they will bear much fruit as he said in verse 8. What kind of fruit? Again in all three synoptic gospels Jesus told them at the beginning when he called them, “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” The fruit of that promise would occur after his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

In Acts 1:8 Jesus told them – But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 2 records the Holy Spirit coming and filling them. Peter witnessed right away by preaching the gospel and 3000 came to faith and salvation. The original 11 disciples, now apostles, along with Paul would remain in Christ and would bear fruit as his witnesses to the ends of the earth.

A **third** reason to remain in Christ is in verse 8. Jesus said – “This is to my Father’s glory that you bear much fruit.” The glory of God is mankind’s chief end. When we preach, teach, witness to the gospel it testifies to the electing, saving grace of God in Christ. Thereby we glorify his Father as the first cause of our salvation which was accomplished for us at the first Easter. We have every reason to remain in him.

But will we? The answer is yes. In the **Five Doctrines of Grace** also known as the **Five Points of Calvinism**, number five is *Perseverance of the Saints*. It means that those who are the elect, saints chosen by God for salvation will never fall away. IOW they will remain in Christ and in the faith that God by his grace has given them. In John 6:39 Jesus said, “and this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.” Will we remain? Yes. Once called to remain, we will remain.

Rule – John 15:9-14

Four times in verses 9-14 Jesus used the words, ‘command’ or ‘commands’. In the Greek they mean, **“an authoritative prescription or precept.”** In English, **“a rule of conduct.”** In verse 9 there is a command, a rule of conduct from Christ that they remain in his love, i.e. his love for them. If they obey verse 10 says they will

remain in his love. He uses himself as an example of obedience to his Father's commands and therefore he remains in his Father's love to him.

To remain in his love for us involves obedience to commands just as he did. But where is the grace? How does it fit in? Isn't this just another law(s) to obey? Before grace came to us, before we were given faith to believe, we did not love God. We had no reason to love him. But grace came and with it came regeneration with faith as a gift from God, forgiveness and salvation, justification and sanctification. The result was love for God for what he has done for us and thus obedience.

Love is the first fruit of the Holy Spirit as Galatians 5:22-23 tells us. Love is the first sign that we have genuinely been saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, all to the glory of God alone as the Reformers put it. In verse 11 Jesus said to remain so that his joy would be in them and so their joy would be complete. What is the second fruit of the Holy Spirit? It is joy. In Hebrews 12:2 the writer said, *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Fix our eyes, our faith on him. What joy was set before him? It was the joy of sitting down. His work on the cross was finished. It accomplished what God set out to do in eternity which was to save his elect. That was Christ's joy, their joy and our joy, complete in him as we remain in him and his love.

In verse 12 Jesus said – *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”* How much did he love them and in reality us? Verse 13 – *“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”* John Calvin writes, ***“God might have redeemed us by a single word, or by a mere act of his will, if he had not thought it better for our benefit, that by not sparing his only Son, he might testify in his person how much he cares for our salvation.”*** He has the greater love & obedience for our salvation.

Relationship – John 15:15-17

In verse 15 Jesus calls them friends. Friendship is a relationship. In verse 16 Jesus said – *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last.”* Jesus chose them to be his friends; to be in a relationship with him, not just for the three years they would spend together, but for all of eternity. Jesus uses the language of election and predestination He chose them just as *“God chose us in him before the creation of the world”* as Paul said,

“for our salvation”, as Calvin said, *“to be holy and blameless in his sight”* as Paul said. Ephesians 1:4.

Jesus chose and appointed them to bear fruit that would last. Their gospel witness still bears fruit today as people are drawn by authentic preaching to the gospel and thus to Christ and into a relationship that will last forever. They and we are called to remain in Christ. Amen. So be it. *Soli Deo Gloria.*