

John 15: Jesus' "Viability" Theology

The "Grace" Paradigm - Recap

John 15.16

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

¹⁰ If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love,
just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command.

¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business.
Instead, I have called you friends,
for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you
so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.

Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

John 15: Jesus' "Viability" Theology

❖ The Paradigm of Viability (vss. 1-4)

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

*He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit,
while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes
so that it will be even more fruitful.*

Remain in me, as I also 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."

❖ The Heart of Viability (v. 9; see also vss. 4-5, 10)

*"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.
If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept
my Father's commands and remain in his love."*

❖ The Enhanced Paradigm of Viability (vss. 5-8)

"I am the vine; you are the branches.

If you remain in me and I in you,

you will bear much fruit;

apart from me you can do nothing.

*This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit,
showing yourselves to be my disciples."*

❖ The Expanded Paradigm of Viability (vss. 9-16)

(1) The Love-Obedience Paradigm (vss. 9-11)

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love,

just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love."

(2) The Relationship Paradigm (vss. 12-14)

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.”

(3) The Partnership Paradigm (vs. 15)

“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

(4) The Grace Paradigm (vs. 16)

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”

*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you
so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.
Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.*

❖ Within this “paradigm of grace” which Jesus is declaring to his disciples, are three foundational truths that every Christ-follower must deeply assimilate—

(1) **A right relationship with Christ is based on divine prerogative:** *“You did not choose me, I chose you.”* The testimony of John the Baptizer when he saw Jesus: *“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1.29) was a determination made in eternity past: *the Book of Life that belongs to the Lamb who was slaughtered before the world was made* (Revelation 13.8 NLT), and provided the basis for God the Father to exercise His prerogative to choose for His eternal purposes and glory those who would be contaminated by sin.

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. (TITUS 3.4-7)

(2) A right relationship with God (and a suitability to serve the purposes of God) **requires a compatibility that could only be accomplished through Jesus**, “the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world.” The Apostle Paul wrote:

For He chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will . . . In [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. (EPHESIANS 1.4-8)

Repeatedly, Jesus has emphasized the word “in” (Jesus’ “in” theology) and reminded his disciples that there is no basis or viability for a relationship with God apart from being “in him”—a fundamental apostolic truth.

But now [God] has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. (COLOSSIANS 1.22-23a)

(3) This choice of **divine prerogative** and **qualification** was brought to us as **the grace and truth that came through Jesus Christ** (John 1.17). The Apostle John wrote:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (P14)

Reflecting the words of Jesus to Nicodemus (John 3.16), the Apostle Paul wrote:

Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. . . . through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (EPHESIANS 2.3-5, 8-10)

Continuing this theme and applying it to his own salvation and calling, he wrote:

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ. (EPHESIANS 3.7-8)

- ❖ Only through divine prerogative can we be brought into a right relationship with God; only “in Jesus” do we have right standing, acceptability, compatibility, and qualification before God; only in him do we have life and the right to be the children of God (John 1.9, 11-13); and only in him is it possible for our lives to have viability (Ephesians 2.10). This is Jesus’ paradigm of grace — and, if grace has its full effect in our lives, we will possess real and lasting viability: “so that you might go and bear fruit — fruit that will last.” (See also: Titus 2.11-14; Hebrews 13.20-21; 1 Peter 1.7; 4.10-11)
- ❖ In his “paradigm of viability” Jesus presented the evidence of viability: **fruit**. No fruit, no viability: “*He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit*” (15.2a). When there is fruit, the True Gardener seeks **more fruit**: “*every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful*” (15.2b). But what the True Vine and the True Gardener really desire is “**much fruit**”— “*This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples*” (15.8). But there is an ultimate purpose that Jesus has in mind: “**fruit that will last**” (15.16) — fruit that has eternal value and will “*result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed*” (1 Peter 1.7), eternal fruit that fulfills the Father’s eternal purpose for us (Ephesians 2.10).