

# John 15: Jesus' “Viability” Theology

## *The “Grace” Paradigm*

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John 15.16



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

<sup>10</sup> 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.

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

<sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

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

<sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command.

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> This is my command: Love each other.



# The Theology of “Choosing”

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

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*As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.*

MATTHEW 9.9

- ❖ When Jesus spoke these words, the thoughts of each disciple undoubtedly went back to the moment when they encountered Jesus and he called each one to follow him: Peter and Andrew engaged in fishing on the Sea of Galilee, Matthew in his traitorous capacity as a tax collector for the Roman government, Nathaniel hearing Jesus say: *“I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.”* Each of their settings were different and each one knew that he would still be “back there” if Jesus had not come to him and called them to follow him.



❖ In his Prologue, the Apostle John stated—

*He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

He then 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.*

❖ On this final evening with his disciples before his death, Jesus is laying the foundation for the “once for all” comprehensive revelation that would be given to the apostles through the Holy Spirit. The scope of his teaching this evening is panoramic — the Godhead, the authority of Scripture, eschatology, prayer, pneumatology (the Holy Spirit), discipleship, perseverance — but, at the heart of it all, is this soteriological truth which John has stated in his prologue: *we have been called into an exclusive relationship with the eternal God through His initiative and grace.*



❖ Set within the context of Jesus' discipleship teaching, it is obvious that Jesus is speaking to his disciples about their apostolic calling and mission, but preceding that calling and mission is the divine initiative that called each of them out of their past into lives transformed by divine truth and power. It was true of the apostles and it is true of every follower of Christ: we did not choose him, he chose us. Within this "paradigm of grace" which Jesus is declaring to his disciples, are three foundational truths that we must understand and appreciate—

(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.



(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” just as he is “in the Father.” It is only through Christ that we can be right with God—through listening to his words and accepting his truth and obeying his commands. We have no other standing or basis of compatibility with God apart from Christ: he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life and no one comes to the Father except through him (John 14.6).



(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. . . . it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.* (EPHESIANS 2.3-5, 8-9)

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 (cf. 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)