

Staying Connected

John 15.1-17

January 17, 2021

Introduction:

- The farewell discourse is a well-established biblical genre. Some examples include Moses's farewell addresses to his nation (Deut. 31-33), similar addresses by Joshua (Josh. 23-24) and Samuel (1 Sam. 12).
- the discourse begins in 13.31 and includes the High Priestly prayer of chapter 17
- The following list identifies the characteristics of a farewell discourse:
 - a summoning of followers, either physically or in absence by way of a letter
 - an announcement of approaching death
 - a recollection of past association
 - exhortations to remain faithful to a shared ideal and to past instruction
 - revelation of future events
 - predictions of woe and controversies, sometimes accompanied by warnings against false teachers or those who would betray the ideals of the group
 - instructions regarding how to live a godly life in the absence of the writer after his departure
 - prayers and blessings for those left behind.
- There are two New Testament epistles that fall into place if we approach them with the features of the farewell discourse in mind. They are Philippians and 2 Peter. In addition, 2 Timothy was written while Paul was on death row, awaiting execution. As a result, we can read it like other farewell discourses as giving us the writer's "last words" on life.¹

Explanation of the Text

- last "I Am" statement
- the word translated 'to prune' (*kathairō*) can also mean 'to clean' or 'to purify'.
- the verb "to dwell," or "stay," or "remain" in this context, suggests an act of the will, a conscious decision to "dwell," or make a home, in one's present relationship to Jesus.
- the fruit of the vine is Christlikeness.
- the implication is that those who do not obey Jesus will experience judgment (3:18; 8:21, 24; 12:25, 48; 17:12).
- cf. John 13.14-15
- Abraham, Moses, Lazarus; what is the difference between a friend and a slave?
- the privilege bestowed on the disciples was not on account of their worth but through electing grace.
- the paragraph ends as it began (v 12) with the reiterated command for mutual love, and so brings the discourse on the Vine fittingly to its conclusion. The injunction to love is the first and last word of Christ to his friends.

Implications of the Text: love is important to/for staying connected because it impacts...

1. salvation
 - a. the motivation to stay connected to the vine is to have life; if a branch gets separated from the vine it will die
 - b. The Parable of the Sower -- Matthew 13

¹ Ryken, L. (2016). *Letters of Grace & Beauty: A Guided Literary Study of New Testament Epistles* (pp. 40–41). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

- c. So, then there are three ways in which we can be useless branches. We can refuse to listen to Jesus Christ at all. We can listen to him, and then render him a lip-service un-supported by any deeds. We can accept him as Master, and then, in the face of the difficulties of the way or the desire to do as we like, abandon him. One thing we must remember. It is a first principle of the New Testament that *uselessness invites disaster*. The fruitless branch is on the way to destruction.

2. effectiveness

- a. if we get disconnected from the vine we will not produce any of the desired fruit; apart from Jesus we can do nothing...
- b. Isaiah 5.1-8
- c. The secret of the life of Jesus was his contact with God. We must keep contact with Jesus. We cannot do that unless we deliberately take steps to do it. It will mean arranging life, arranging prayer, arranging silence in such a way that there is never a day when we give ourselves a chance to forget him.

Conclusion(s) -- as long as we stay connected to Jesus we can...

- rest in the assurance of our salvation
- have a positive impact on the advancement of the Kingdom of God

Amen.