

John 15-16

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Analysis

Chapters 15-16 form the third cycle dealing with the three great themes of the URD:

- 15:1-17 discusses our relation with the Lord and with each other.
- 15:18-16:15 discusses the world's hatred and the resources that the Lord gives us to deal with it.
- 16:16-33 discusses the Lord's coming departure and the promise of his return.

15:1-17, Abiding and Fruit-Bearing

Two aspects are in focus: their relation individually to him (vv. 1-11), and the consequent relation they have with one another (vv. 12-17). The underlying principle is summarized in 1 John 1:3,

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us [among believers corporately]: and truly our fellowship [individually] *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

1-11, *The Believer's Individual Relation with the Lord*

These verses are marked by frequent repetition of the verb “abide” *menw*. This chapter contains more instance of this word than any other in John (12/34; John 1 is next with 5), and all but one (v. 16) are in vv. 1-11. (v.16 uses the word in a different sense, and does not talk of our abiding in Christ or his in us.)

vv. 1-8 develop our relation with the Lord under the picture of a vine and its branches. vv. 9-11 move beyond the metaphor to a literal statement of our relation. The verb “abide” provides the continuity between them.

1-8, The Vine Metaphor

There are three elements to this metaphor: the vine, the husbandman, and the branches. The focus in 1-3 is on the vine and the husbandman, while in 4-7 (cf. v.5), it is on the vine and the branches. v.8 will pull these two back together again.

1-3, *The Vine and the Husbandman*

15:1 I am the true vine.--All three of the main words in this clause deserve attention. We must understand the image of the *vine*, what it means to be the *true* vine, and how the Lord can say that *he* is that true vine.

When the Lord calls himself the “*true* vine,” he means truth as contrasted, not with falsehood, with shadow or type. We saw this usage in 1:17,

For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Cf. Heb 9:24 and 8:2 for this usage: the earthly sanctuary was only a figure, a pattern, of the true

sanctuary, which is heaven.

Thus the Lord claims to be the fulfillment, the realization, of what the vine represented in the OT. And what was that?

The *vine* in the OT is a pervasive figure of Israel, often in a lament over its apostasy.

Psalm 80:8 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.

Jeremiah 2:21 Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

Isaiah 5:7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts *is* the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

Hosea 10:1 Israel *is* an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.

Ezek 15:6 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

In the light of passages such as these, it is most straightforward to understand the vine as an image of Israel, brought out of Egypt as a slip, planted in Canaan, but largely unfruitful.

Israel was the typical vine. Now the true vine appears, the reality to which the metaphor corresponds, and the Lord claims that *he* is that true vine, the fulfillment of Israel's frustrated promise.

The idea that the Messiah is identified with Israel is not new. Isaiah makes it, in his servant songs. The Servant of the Lord is clearly Messianic, as in Isa 42:1-4 and 52:13-ch 53. Yet he is sometimes clearly identified with Israel:

41:8, thou art Israel, my servant

44:1-2 Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: ² Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, *which* will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.

44:21 ²¹ Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou *art* my servant: I have formed thee; thou *art* my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.

ch. 49 in particular plays on the ambivalence: the one who *is* Israel serves to *redeem* Israel:

49:3-6 Thou *art* my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. ⁵ And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb *to be* his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. ⁶ And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

The identify of the Lord with his people is central to the notion of redemption:

53:4-5 ⁴ Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we

are healed.

Now the Lord develops the identity further. Not only does he take the place of his people before God in judgment, but they become parts of him, branches of the vine, members of his body, through whom he bears fruit in the world. Thus John is again presenting the roots of Paul's teaching of the church as the body of Christ.

and my Father is the husbandman.--As in the OT images. It is important to remember that the Father, and not a human farmer, is the husbandman here. Different species of vines require different practices. The Father's methods with his spiritual vines may vary from those that a human farmer uses with a local variety of grape. Some scholars try to reason from details of established agricultural practice at the time to the interpretation of this passage. This approach fails, as we shall see. The basic principles of viticulture carry over, but not the details. Calvin already appreciated this nearly 500 years ago:

First, let [the reader] remember the rule which ought to be observed in all parables; that we ought not to examine minutely every property of the vine, but only to take a general view of the object to which Christ applies that comparison.

2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit.--We need to give attention to the connection of the phrase "in me." Does it modify "branch" (as the AV suggests), or "beareth" (in which case we should translate, "every branch that beareth fruit in me")? Nowhere in John is "in me" (or "in him" referring to the Lord Jesus) ever attributive. See tabulation in the notes. It is occasionally used as a predicate, but mostly adverbially. So we should understand the Lord to be speaking, not of "the branches that are in him," but of branches that "bear fruit by being in him" (or not).

The difference is important. The AV reading asserts that some branches that are "in him" still do not bear fruit. Because they are "in him," we would be inclined to understand that they are believers, in spite of their fruitlessness. The adverbial reading simply notes that bearing fruit is something that can only be done in him, and suggests that if some branches do not bear fruit, it is because they are not in fact in him.

fruit.--The actions in this section all turn on the notion that we bear fruit. What is this fruit? The best commentary appears to be Gal 5:22, which describes "the fruit of the Spirit." Recall that the fruit here originates from the abiding of Christ in the believer. That abiding was promised in 14:23 ("abode"), and as we have seen, consists of the indwelling HS. So both here and in Galatians, the fruit results from the Spirit. It consists of the qualities that the HS produces in the life of the believer.

he taketh away ... he purgeth it.--The relation of these two verbs is the object of extensive debate. They obviously describe things that the Father does to people, and they are based on things that a husbandman would do to a vine.

The meaning of "purgeth" is not in much question. The Father "purges," cleanses, fruitful vines, so that they can bear more fruit. This meaning is in keeping with ancient viticultural usage (G.W. Derickson, *BibSac* 1996 (153), 34-52), which uses the verb to describe the care given to a fruitful branch to increase its fruitfulness.

The question comes with the verb "taketh away," *hairw.* which may mean either "lift up" or "take away." It is not a standard viticultural term, but might logically refer to two distinct kinds of farming activities.

1. Some grapes are grown on arbors or trellises and it might make sense for the farmer to "lift up"

a fruitless branch to expose it to the light and air and thus encourage it to bear fruit.

2. Alternatively, pruning is a prominent activity with vines, and the farmer often “takes away” branches.

Derickson argues on the basis of Pliny's *Natural History* (an encyclopaedia written in AD 77 by a Roman author) and his own viticultural experience for the former meaning here. His article is worth reading, but he misses an important point. The Lord Jesus is not describing what a human arborist does, but what his Father does. In fact, as Derickson notes, Pliny states explicitly that “every part is pruned off that has borne fruit the previous year,” which is clearly *not* what the Father is doing here. The focus of the metaphor is on the relation of branches to the vine, the notion of fruitfulness, and the kinds of operations that can be done to the branches, but does not extend to what operations are appropriate in what circumstances.

Beareth not fruit ... he taketh away.--Just what does the Father do with fruitless branches? We can learn both from this passage and from others.

In this passage, we will see that v. 6 describes the fate of fruitless branches. They are cast forth, dried, up, and eventually burned.

Elsewhere in Scripture, fruitlessness leads to removal:

Matthew 3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (John the Baptist)

Matthew 21:19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

Luke 13:6-9 A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. 7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? 8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: 9 And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down.

Hebrews 6:7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: 8 But that which beareth thorns and briers *is* rejected, and *is* nigh unto cursing; whose end *is* to be burned.

Luke 13 is important in setting the context. The husbandman is patient in seeking fruit. He cultivates the plants and encourages them. But when it is clear that the lack of fruit is due to the lack of life, the result is unambiguous. Fruitless professors are destroyed.

beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.--This point is clearly at odds with the ancient practice as recorded in Pliny. The ancient farmer pruned off the branches that have already borne fruit because they are worn out. Believers don't wear out in fruit-bearing—they improve. The Lord, unlike the human farmer, preserves the branches that have borne fruit and cleanses them to improve their productivity.

A contract for vineyard labor from about AD 280, preserved in Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, details certain responsibilities such as “picking off shoots,” “removal of shoots,” “needful thinning of foliage.” By pinching off superfluous growth, the husbandman encourages the plant to put its energy into fruit production rather than leafing.

This kind of activity is probably the metaphor that the Lord has in mind here. The flesh tends to divert our energy into all sorts of secondary things. The heavenly farmer pinches off these excrescences so that we learn to focus on the things that are of heavenly value.

3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.-- “Clean” *kaqaros* is from the same root as “purge” *kaqarizw*. Here we learn the method by which the branches are cleansed and the suckers removed: the appropriate application of the Lord's words.

2 Tim 3:16,17 is an important guide here:

¹⁶ All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Doctrine alone is not enough. It must be followed by reproof, correction, and instruction.

- **Reproof** is calling attention to something that is wrong, shining light into the dark corners of our lives and bringing to light things that we are trying to hide. Cf. John 3:20, “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d.”
- **Correction** is setting right what is wrong. It's not enough to learn how we have erred; we need to understand what conduct in this circumstance would be pleasing to God.
- **Instruction** is better rendered, “training” or “discipline.” Simply hearing what is expected of us is not enough. We need discipline, repetitive training to habituate us to the expected conduct.

Paul describes Scripture as the agent of all four of these. But the application of Scripture to the heart is far more than an academic exercise. Godliness is a laboratory course. Prov 3:11-12, expounded in Heb 12:5-13, shows that this application frequently takes the form of unpleasant experiences.

Compare also

1 Cor 10:13, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make an outcome, that ye may be able to bear *it*.” The “outcome” (“way to escape” in AV) is the fruit promised as a result of the cleansing.

Job 23:10, “when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

The universal teaching of Scripture is that God allows believers to suffer in order to draw their attention to principles of his word. His purpose is not to harm us, but to purify and strengthen us, that we “may bring forth more fruit.”

With his statement, “ye are clean,” compare 13:10, “ye are clean, but not all.” The exception there was due to Judas.

4-7, The Vine and the Branches

Though the explicit metaphor is not introduced until v.5, it is clear that v.4 anticipates it. Structurally, v.4 is a linked keyword transition, linked by “abide.” (Or alternatively, it and v.6 chiasmatically enclose v.5, with their complementary logical implications.)

4 Abide in me, and I in you.--The Lord now introduces an expression, “abide in me,” that appears 12 times in John's writings. Understanding it is critical for us.

Actually, he introduced the expression already in 6:56. An accurate understanding of that verse requires that we note its parallels with vv. 40 and 54:

6:40	6:54	6:56
every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him,	Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood,	He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood,
may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.	hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.	dwelleth in me, and I in him.

These parallels show that our dwelling in him and he in us is equivalent to having eternal life. It is not an add-on, but the heart of our relationship with him. Paul emphasizes this in Rom 8:9,

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

But then, what does it mean that the Lord here commands the eleven, whom he declares to be “clean,” to “abide in him”? Judas is already out of the way. Does he want them to entertain doubts about their own salvation? Is it possible for them not to abide in him? Three answers have been proposed.

- A common dispensational position (Zane Hodges) is that abiding here refers to fellowship, not salvation. But this is at odds with the clear teaching of 6:56.
- The Arminian believes that one who is the Lord's can later fall away and be lost. But this contradicts a wide range of teaching, e.g., Rom 8:29-30.
- The classical Calvinist position is that the exhortation is addressed to them as members of the visible body of Christ, encouraging them not to presume upon their position in the church.

It seems to me that the last is the closest here. Consider Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 10:12,

let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

The believer who truly appreciates the fate from which he has been saved will not presume upon the Lord's grace, but will tightly cling to him. Gene showed us a picture from their trip to California, how he rappelled down a cliff with Carissa. You can be sure that he had her very securely tied to himself, and that he was not going to drop her. But I'm also sure that she held very tightly to him on the way down.

Thus Heb 3:6 teaches,

we are his house [now], if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Or Heb 3:14,

For we are made partakers of Christ [finished work], if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

Or Col 1:21-23,

And you ... hath he reconciled [past tense] ²³ If ye continue [*epimenw*] in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel.

Or 1 John 2:19,

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued [*menw* “abided”] with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Those who are truly saved will hold tightly to Christ. Those who do not abide in him, show that their salvation was only superficial in the first place.

Constable cites 8:31 as evidence that one can believe in Jesus without abiding:

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue [abide] in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed;

On the contrary, he is here diagnosing a defective form of belief. Note from our earlier study on that passage:

- “Believed on him” is not the same idiom as in v. 30. but simply *pisteuw* followed by the dative. Whenever it appears in John (4:21; 5:46; 6:30; 8:45, 46; 10:37; 14:11), it has the sense of acknowledging the truth of what one says. It is never associated with any promise of eternal value, as is *pisteuw eis*. This alerts us that the belief of these Jews is not yet where it needs to be.
- The same group continues in conversation with him without reidentification until v. 48. In 44-47, he characterizes them as “of your father the devil” and “not of God,” and says explicitly, “ye believe me not.”

It is possible to “believe for a while, and ... fall away” (Luke 8:31). John 8:31 provides the key to distinguishing between such temporary, man-made belief and the true belief that is the work of God (6:29). It is continuing in his word, which probably indicates the same relationship as abiding in him.

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.--This is the first half of an important claim: If we do not abide, we cannot bear fruit.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches.--Here is the explicit metaphor on which 4-8 rests. This saying is parallel to v.1, and together the two spell out the framework of the metaphor.

He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.--This is the second half of the claim begun in v.4. There, we learned that if we do not abide, we will not bear fruit. Here we learn that if we do abide, we will bear fruit. Thus the set of those who abide and the set of those who bear fruit contain exactly the same people.

for without me ye can do nothing.--Recalling v.4, and thus pulling the entire syllogism together.

6 If a man abide not in me.--The Lord clearly entertains the possibility that someone might be associated with him and later turn aside, as Judas did.

- Arminians seize on this verse as evidence that a saved person can later be lost.
- In reaction against this, dispensationalists try to water down the notion of “abiding” to refer simply to fellowship: the person is still saved, but just out of fellowship.

The key is to recall what the previous two verses have said about abiding. Abiding is intimately connected with fruit-bearing. If we do not abide, we cannot bear fruit (v. 4), and if we do abide, we will bear fruit (v. 5). The abiders are identical with the fruit-bearers. So one who does not abide is one who does not bear fruit. The Lord's focus is on the fruit, the outward evidence of our relation with him. This is the objective of the husbandman's work in 1-3; this is the result of abiding in 4-7. Cf. also the

summary in v.8.

Our salvation exists at two levels. “man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Sam 16:7). A person may very well appear to be a believer, and then fall away. At first their life shows budding grapes, but as they develop they turn out to be sour, wild grapes, not the true fruit. It is equally wrong

- to say that they were truly saved and lost their salvation,
- and to argue that since they once received Christ, they must still be saved, though out of fellowship.

The idea that fruit that at first appears promising may turn out to be defective is intrinsic to the vineyard metaphor. Compare Isa 5:2, 4.

Existentially, as far as any of us could tell, such a person was in Christ, but did not abide in Christ. Our Lord's language here is not intended for trained theologians seeking to make lawyerly distinctions, but for common Christians managing their affairs in a living church.

Nevertheless, note that he does not say, “If ye abide not in me,” but “if someone does not abide.” Now that Judas is gone, they are clean (v.3). His words are not intended to distress their hearts, but to warn them that others may arise, like Judas, whose faith is not genuine.

he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered.--The image is of the branches being pruned and cast out of the vineyard, to dry until they can be used as fuel. When a person's life does not match his profession, he is to be “cast forth,” excommunicated from the fellowship. Paul calls this process “delivering unto Satan” (1 Tim 1:20), removing them from the fellowship of God's people and leaving them exposed to the prince of this world.

and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire.--Note the shift from singular to plural. The Lord is moving from the realm of reality (the person who does not abide) to the metaphor. What do people do with dried-up branches? They burn them.

and they are burned.--Two grammatical details merit our attention.

First, the verb is singular, not plural: “he [or “it”] is burned.” Why the change in number, back to the singular? I believe to make clear that the burning is not just part of the description of what people do to physical branches, but what will happen to “a man” who “abide[s] not in me.”

Second, it is in the present tense, indicating ongoing action. He burns, keeps on burning, where “the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:43-48).

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you.--Compare v.4, “abide in me, and I in you.” How does the Lord abide in his people?

- The parallel of 14:23, 16, 26 shows that it is by means of the Holy Spirit.
- The parallel of 15:4, 7 shows that it is through the word of Christ abiding in us.

The two are not really that different. The mission of the Spirit, after all, is to remind us of his words (14:26). The indwelling Spirit enables the indwelling word of Christ, which realizes the indwelling Christ himself.

Just as Christ's abiding in us is identified with his words abiding in us, so our abiding in him can be described as our abiding in his word, 8:31.

The intimate linkage between the person and the word is so strong that 1 John 2:24 guarantees that having God's word abiding in us ensures that we shall abide in him:

Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain [abide] in you, ye also shall continue [abide] in the Son, and in the Father.

Once again, we see the primacy of the Word of the Lord in our spiritual nurture and sustenance. There is good reason that of the four activities of the early church mentioned in Acts 2:42, the first one is doctrine.

ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.--This is the second of three promises of answered prayer in John's gospel. The other two are 14:13-14 and 16:23-24. In those places, the condition is that they ask "in my name." Here that is not stated, but an equivalent condition is given: abiding in him and having his words abide in us. If we are filled with and controlled by his teaching, we will ask in keeping with his will.

8, Summary

This last verse summarizes the entire metaphor, and refers to its two parts.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.--The first half reminds us of v.1. The Father is the husbandman, laboring over the vine so that it will produce fruit. Naturally, the more fruit, the more fulfilled the husbandman is, and the more glorified he is. If this is the end to which he exerts his efforts, he is glorified by its success.

so shall ye be my disciples.--This half of v.8 summarizes the second half of the metaphor, vv. 4-8, reminding us of v.5. This half focuses on the relation between the Lord and us. The verb "be" here might better be translated "become." Our salvation may be an immediate transaction on the spiritual level, but outwardly we mature over time, becoming more and more the disciples of the Lord in the eyes of others. Compare 8:31: obedience proves that we are the Lord's true disciples.

9-11, The Literal Statement

The "abide" language continues here, but the vineyard imagery has disappeared. It appears that the Lord is now explaining the foundation of the metaphor, just what it means to abide in him. To see the development, we must note that "continue" in v.9 and "remain" in v.11 both represent *menw*, the Greek verb translated "abide" earlier in the chapter. With this clue, we see here an exposition of the *nature*, the *means*, and the *result* of our abiding in him.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue [abide] ye in my love.--Previously, he spoke of abiding in him. Now he speaks of abiding in his love. This amplifies for us the *nature* of abiding in him. It is to value his love, to treasure it, to conduct ourselves in such a way as to nurture and encourage that love. This command naturally leads us to ask, "How can we do this?" To this question, v.10 gives the answer.

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.--Obedience to his commands is the *means* by which we abide in his love. At first glance, this sounds like works salvation, but recall our discussion of 14:23-24, where we saw extensive scriptural evidence that our love for God and his love for us feed one each

other. Obedience does not place us in his love in the first place, but it does maintain the relationship of love that we enjoy with the Lord. Cf. “abide in my word” in 8:31.

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain [abide] in you, and that your joy might be full.--The *result* of abiding in him is that we will experience his joy.

This is the third of the Lord's emotions that he has promised to give us: “my peace” in 14:27; “my love” in 15:10; and now “my joy.” A natural question concerns the role of the genitive “my” in each case. Does it describe the Lord as the experiencer of the emotion, or merely as the source of it?

“*My love*” appears to be the passing on to us of the love that the Lord Jesus receives from the Father. He loves us with the love that he experiences from the Father.

Similarly, “*my joy*” appears to be an allusion to frequent OT references to God's joy in his people. Compare

Zeph 3:17, The LORD thy God in the midst of thee *is* mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

Isa 62:4, 5 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. 5 For *as* a young man marrieth a virgin, *so* shall thy sons marry thee: and *as* the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, *so* shall thy God rejoice over thee.

Isa 65:19, And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. (As in John, the Lord's joy results in the people's joy.)

cf. Heb 12:2, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Thus the point here is that our joy results from the assurance that the Lord is joyful in us.

How about “*my peace*” in 14:27? At first glance this seems to be more source than experiencer. But consider: As our sin-bearer, the Lord Jesus felt God's wrath against sin. But when he had paid the price and was raised from the dead, he enjoyed the first true peace that any human has since Adam. And this peace is what we, being in him, enjoy. So here, as with the other two, we may consider that Jesus is offering us what he has proven in his own experience. In experiencing his love, his joy, his peace, we are entering into his experience; we are becoming identified with him; we are *abiding in him*. This is the great privilege of our identification with him.

12-17, Love Among the Believers

This paragraph moves from the believer's individual relation to the Lord (vv. 1-11) to the relationship among believers (vv. 12-17). It is a unit, as shown by the repetition of the command to love in vv. 12, 17. Yet it continues the theme of fruit-bearing that was so prominent in 1-8 (cf. v. 16, and keyword “abide”). It is related to 1-11 in two ways.

1. The previous paragraph shows that abiding in Jesus means abiding in his word. Now he gives us a specific word in which we are to abide, a specific command that we are to obey. Note how he picks up the first reference to this commandment in 13:34,35, where loving one another shows that we are his disciples.

2. The relation between the two sections (our individual relation to the Lord, and our relation with one another) is summarized in 1 John 1:3,

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us [among believers corporately]: and truly our fellowship [individually] *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

The closer we draw individually to the Lord, the closer we come to one another. People who seek unity for its own sake tend to splinter into many groups. But if we have a common center, abiding in him inevitably leads to union with one another.

First, the Lord develops the commandment through four supplementary concepts, culminating in the idea that it is a command to friends and not just to servants. Then, through two contrasts, he explains what it means to be his friends and how they came to that honored position. Both of these contrasts motivate the command that they are to love one another, which he repeats explicitly to mark the end of the section.

Exegetical note: Recognizing the inclusio between 12 and 17 is an important clue to interpreting the intermediate verses. Even though “love” isn’t mentioned explicitly in 14-16, they make excellent sense when interpreted in terms of the surrounding theme.

12-14, Statement of the Theme

12 This is my commandment.--15:10 defined abiding as keeping his commandments (plural). Now he singles out one commandment for special attention.

He develops this commandment incrementally, like adding beads to a string.

That ye love one another.--*The first bead* is the requirement that they love one another.

This commandment is not so much selected from a larger set, as it is a summary of them. Compare the Lord’s response to a lawyer seeking to trip him up with a question about the greatest commandment in the law, in Matt 22.

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Matt 22:40 teaches that these two commandments, love of God and love of one’s neighbor, are the foundation of every other commandment.

Why does he select this commandment, rather than starting with the commandment to love God? Because he has already told them that loving him is shown by obedience. The direct outward evidences of loving God are rituals and ceremonies that too often can be hypocritical and insincere. The true evidence that we love God is seen in our obedience to more practical concerns, which all flow from loving our neighbor.

as I have loved you.--Thus far, the Lord is repeating the ethic of the old covenant. But in 13:34, he called this a *new* commandment. The novelty is that the standard is no longer “love thy neighbor as thyself” (Lev 19:18, 34), but “as I have loved you.” This standard is *the second bead*.

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.--And how is it

that he loves them? He did not amplify this in 13:34, but now he does. He loves them more than to teach them, and more than to wash their feet. He will lay down his life for them. This revelation is the *third bead*.

Note how he reveals his new standard of love. He could have said,

“Love one another as I have loved you. I will lay down my life for you.”

Instead, he generalizes his coming sacrifice into a general principle:

“that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

This generalization embodies the point he is making. They are to be ready to lay down their lives for their friends, just as he will lay down his for them.

In making this generalization, he introduces the *fourth bead*, the notion that they are his friends.

14 Ye are my friends.--It is one thing for them to consider one another as friends, but another entirely for the Lord to call them friends. The title “friend of Caesar” (19:12) “later became an official designation of an intimate friend of the emperor.” Similarly, for a person of high status to call someone lower his “friend” is a great honor.

if ye do whatsoever I command you.--Here is the requirement for being known as the Lord's friends. We have come back again to the principle we have seen before. Our relationship with the Lord shows itself in our obedience, whether you describe that relationship as being a disciple (8:31; 15:8), or abiding in him (15:5), or enjoying his love (15:10), or being his friend (15:14). .

15-16, Explanation of “My Friends”

Now the Lord introduces two contrasts to help them understand their place as his friends. Note the parallels between them. Both include a negative statement, a positive statement, and a statement about their communication with the Father. In each case, one of the contrasting statements is modified, using the same logical connective as the statement about communication with the Father. If we interpret these contrasts in the light of the command to “love one another,” we can see each of them as a motive.

	v.15: Their Position	v.16: The Initiative
Negative statement	Henceforth I call you not servants;	Ye have not chosen me,
Amplification	for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth:	
Positive statement	but I have called you friends;	but I have chosen you, and ordained you,
Amplification		that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and <i>that</i> your fruit should remain:
Communication with the Father	for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.	that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.
Motive	If we are all the Lord's friends, we ought not to fight with one another. If we treasure his favor, we will love others upon whom he has bestowed it.	If our Lord has chosen each of us then we must deal with one another as with those appointed by the Lord. We cannot reject those whom the Lord has chosen.

15, What does it mean to be the Lord's friend?

The first contrast defines their special relationship as his friends.

15 Henceforth I call you not servants.--He does not mean that they *are* not servants. His insistence that they keep his commands shows that this relation still continues. The apostles, including John, delight to call themselves individually "a servant of Jesus Christ" (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1; Jude 1; Rev 1:1). The true believer will always consider himself the Lord's servant. But he condescends to grant them the name of "friend," with certain special privileges that he now explains.

for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth.--The distinction that he wishes to make is that a servant is not expected to understand the reason for the commands he receives.

but I have called you friends.--Two people in the OT bear the name, "friend of God": Abraham (2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8) and Moses (Ex 33:11). This is exalted company into which he invites them.

for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.--The defining character of being a friend is intimacy of communication. This was certainly the case with Abraham and Moses:

Genesis 18:17-18 ¹⁷ And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; ¹⁸ Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

Exodus 33:11 ¹¹ And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.

The Lord has already emphasized (14:26) his intent that they remember and understand his teaching. This assurance that they will know the mind of God is what makes them his friends.

Let's relate this lesson back to the overall theme of the paragraph, "love one another." Hired servants may compete with each other for the master's favor even as they serve him. But he expects those who are in his circle of friends to love and care for one another. "Any friend of my friend is my friend." If I know that he loves someone, I am bound to love them too.

16, How does one become the Lord's friend?

The second contrast tells how they have come into this relationship.

16 Ye have not chosen me.--It was not their idea to become his friends. They may have thought it was. Andrew told Peter, "We have found the Messiah" (1:41), and Philip told Nathanael, "we have found him, of whom Moses ... and the prophets did write," as though their association with him was the result of their insight and initiative.

No one truly comes to Christ without repentance. First we become sorely aware of our need. Then we hear his open invitation:

Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

We are hungry and thirsty, and we eagerly lay hold on the line that he has cast to us. But then, as we grow in our understanding, we realize the depth of our depravity, that we could never have desired him in the first place had he not first laid hold on us. "In spite of what you thought when you first met me, you did not choose me as your friend."

but I have chosen you.--The true initiative was with him.

and ordained you.--Better, “placed,” “appointed.” The point is that they have a place in the body of Christ, a node in the vine. It would be attractive with the Fathers (refs in Alford) to see this as describing their planting or grafting, but both of these are special words, not used here.

He now gives two purposes (*ina*). They appear to be sequential. The first is the immediate purpose of their appointment, while the second results from this fruitfulness.

The immediate purpose, in turn has three components.

that ye should go.--This is another example of John's tendency to record sayings that supplement things that are repeated in the synoptics. In this case, the synoptic statement is the great commission, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel” (Matt 28:19; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). He expects his people to look outward and go with the gospel. Our fellowship with ourselves is precious, but if we, like the Amish, focus only inwardly, we have neglected our Lord's commission to “go.”

and bring forth fruit.--As we go out into an unbelieving world, we are to bear fruit. Thus he picks up the metaphor from vv. 1-8, showing that we are in the same section.

Here, as in 1-8, he speaks of bearing fruit. Earlier in the chapter, guided by the relation to “abiding” and its relation with the Spirit (14:23), we saw a link to the “fruit of the Spirit” in Gal 5:22. Here, in the context of “going,” and with the parallel of the great commission in mind (“go ... and make disciples”), it is tempting to see the fruit as new believers.

It is not unbiblical to speak of converts as fruit:

Rom 1:13, oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some **fruit** among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

Col 1:5,6 ...the word of the truth of the gospel; 6 Which is come unto you, as *it is* in all the world; and bringeth forth **fruit**, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard *of it*, and knew the grace of God in truth:

One can even find grounds for this in John:

John 4:35-38 35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. 36 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth **fruit** unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. 37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. 38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

It is best to connect the primary sense of the Lord's words here with that in 15:1-8. Through ch. 15 he speaks of “bearing fruit,” while in 4:36 the metaphor is to “gather fruit,” and in Col 1:6 it is the gospel, not the preacher, who “bears” the fruit of converts. But there is still an important link between the fruit of the Spirit in our lives and fruit in the form of converts. Our Lord teaches (Matt 5:16),

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Peter (1 Pet 3:1) reminds Christian women with unsaved husbands,

Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

I do not minimize the importance of preaching the gospel. After all, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). But people will only listen to what we have to say if our lives show its effectiveness, and in some cases people will be attracted by our lives and as a result listen to our gospel.

So they are to go, and as they go they are to show the effect of the Spirit to those among whom they move.

and that your fruit should remain.-- “Remain” is *menw*, literally “abide.” Though the word is used in a different sense than previously in the chapter (persistence of fruit rather than intimacy between the believer and the Lord), it provides a thread of verbal continuity through the section.

While the direct reference of “fruit” in this section is to the Spirit's fruit *in* the believer rather than the fruit of converts, converts are the mechanism by which our fruit persists. The Spirit's work in the believer continues beyond one believer's life in the lives of others to whom he has ministered.

that.--By repeating the causal conjunction *ina*, the Lord introduces the indirect result of his appointment of us.

whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name.--Previously the Lord has promised answers to prayer made by those abiding in Christ (15:7) or (as here) “in my name” (14:13-14; cf. 16:23-24). But what is the causal connection between answered prayer and bearing fruit?

- In 15:7, abiding leads to answered prayer.
- In 15:5, abiding leads to fruit.
- Here, fruit leads to answered prayer.

Thus 15:7 is a summary of the trajectory shown in 15:5, 16. Our fruit is the evidence that we are abiding, and therefore an encouragement to us that God will answer our prayers.

How does this section relate to the overarching theme of loving one another? It reminds us that failure to love one another amounts to disagreeing with the Lord's choice! He has chosen each believer, appointed them their ministry, and put in place a process that will produce enduring fruit in their lives. How can we possibly reject them or fail to love them? When we find imperfections, we can be confident that the Lord will deal with them, and this sets us free to love one another.

17, Conclusion

17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.--Here he closes the inclusion with v.12, summarizing the entire paragraph.

15:18-16:16, Believers in the World

See handout for structure of this section. It is 2x2.

- The major division is between the Lord's presence with the disciples (15:18-27) and references to his departure (16:1-15, anticipating the theme of the following section—linked keyword transition).
- Each of these sections is in turn subdivided into two parts, one dealing with the world's rejection (repeated theme: 15:21; 16:3) and the other with the ministry of the comforter (15:26;

16:7).

- By size, the major section on the world's rejection is in the first half, recapped in the second, while the major section on the HS is in the second section, introduced in the first. So it makes sense to expound these by topic (across the rows), rather than sequentially (down the column).

15:18-25, 16:1-6, The World's Rejection

The overriding theme of this section is captured in the repeated statement of 15:21 and 16:3.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

The common features are the world's **action** and the **reason**. The action is directed against the believers, but it stems from their lack of any relationship with the Father and the Son (16:3 *ginwskw*) and their lack of recognition that the Son came under the Father's authority (15:21 *oida*).

15:18-25, Detail

The summary verse has two halves, as does this section as a whole.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake.--This summarizes vv. 18-20, which tell how the world rejects us because of our association with the Lord Jesus.

because they know not him that sent me. --This summarizes vv. 22-25, which tell how it rejects the Lord because of his association with the Father .

In both cases, the key observation is “inherited rejection.” The complete chain is the world hates us because it hates the Lord Jesus, and it hates him because it hates the Father, and it hates the Father because he exposes their sin.

18-20, The world hates us because it hates the Lord Jesus

18 If the world hate you.--Here is the theme of this section. The Lord states the event obliquely, but as his argument proceeds, we come to realize that this hatred is inevitable.

“World” is one of John's favorite words. He uses it 78 times; next is 1 John with 23. It refers to the entire created order, in keeping with its first use in the Greek Bible,

Gen 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host [*kosmos*] of them.

Since the fall, “the whole world lieth in the wicked one” (1 John 5:19), and is characterized by “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). Satan is described as “the prince of this world” (12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

Here is a sober thought, and it is no wonder that the Lord introduces it gently: the whole created order (excepting only the elect angels) hates us and is opposed to us. No wonder we are called “strangers and pilgrims.”

ye know that it hated me before it hated you.--The verb “you know” can be translated either as the indicative (as in the AV) or as the imperative. The forms are identical. Here, the imperative is probably

smoother. “Realize this, remember, bear in mind.”

This verse simply states that the world's hatred for the Lord preceded its hatred for them. The next verse explains *how* the world's hatred of the Lord is transferred to us.

19 If ye were of the world.--Part of it, sharing its principles and values.

the world would love his own.--In general, people prefer to be with those who are like themselves. Even Paul, in Corinth, dwelt with Aquila and Priscilla “because he was of the same craft.” The Nobel-winning economist Thomas Shelling showed that segregation happens whenever people have only a slight preference for others like themselves. This tendency leads to the development of neighborhoods, social clubs, and car pools. How much more is this the case, when the world (as 1 John 5:19 teaches) is under the control of a single power, “the wicked one,” who guides its thoughts and desires.

but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world.--Something fundamental changed when we were saved. We were removed from Satan's power, “delivered ... from the power of darkness, and ... translated into the kingdom of [God's] dear Son” (Col 1:13). We are not physically removed from the world; in fact, the Lord tells his Father in 17:18 that he has sent us into the world. But we are here as strangers and pilgrims, not as citizens, and we need to understand that pilgrims do not enjoy the privileges and status that citizens do. Recall that in the OT, being a “stranger” was one of the three categories of individual that needed special protection, along with orphans and widows (11x in Deut; cf. 10:18).

therefore the world hateth you.--It is uncomfortable to be with people who do not share our ideas. We feel constantly challenged by them. Similarly, the world is challenged by our presence, which reminds them of their sin.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord.--He gave them this principle originally in 13:16, at the foot-washing, explaining that they should serve one another as he had served them. Now he extends its application.

From the world's perspective, it's bad enough that someone—anyone—has taken us out of the world. But when that someone is the Lord Jesus, to whom Satan has such antagonism, the opposition we face is much greater than simply being different.

If they have persecuted me.--Like v. 18, an understatement. They certainly did persecute the Lord Jesus.

they will also persecute you.--We hear far too little of this warning today, at least in the US. We are comfortable and prosperous, and depending on the political winds, may even fancy that we are able to guide the nation. But Paul picked up this warning and reiterated it for his hearers:

Acts 14:22 we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

1 Thes 3:4 we told you before that we should suffer tribulation

2 Tim 3:12 all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

The Greek word *q̄lipsis*, often translated “tribulation,” appears 45x in the NT. Of these, only six are eschatological. The rest all refer to the present age. The Lord wanted his followers to know that they should expect suffering in following him, and the NT writers frequently repeat his warning.

We must recognize that the principles of our Lord are fundamentally opposed to those of the world, and to the extent that we reflect them, the world will hate and reject us.

if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.--Perhaps we are to understand this comment ironically. In general, the world does not keep his saying. But perhaps he refers to those from the world whom he draws to himself. Those who do treasure his words, will treasure ours also.

22-25, The world hates the Lord Jesus because it hates his Father.

Just as the world's hatred for us originates in its hatred for Christ, so its hatred for Christ reflects its animosity with the Father.

Note the internal parallel:

a	22 If I had not come and spoken unto them,	24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did,
b	they had not had sin:	they had not had sin:
c	but now	but now
d	they have no cloke for their sin.	have they both seen
e	23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.	and hated both me and my Father.

Both halves begin with a hypothetical *condition* that could leave them in the *state* of not having sin. Consider first the *state*, then the *condition*.

They had not had sin.--This does not mean that they would be sinless. To “have sin” is to be conscious of sin. It is not the same as to “have sinned,” which means to have committed a sin. John carefully distinguishes these two in 1 John 1:8, 10. To deny that we “have sin” is to deceive ourselves, because we really are conscious of sin. But to deny that we “have sinned,” even after we have confessed all known sin, is to make God a liar, since he knows of “secret sins” for which only the intercession of the Lord Jesus can avail (2:1-2).

What would leave them in this state of not being aware of sin? Answer: The absence of his ministry toward them. As often in John (e.g., 14:10-13), this ministry is represented under two thrusts: his **words** (v. 22) and his **works** (v. 24). The works are a supplementary witness to his words (5:35). They might deny his words, but they cannot overcome the evidence of his works.

The implication is that one objective of the Lord's words and works is to make us aware of our sin. It is popular today to soft-pedal sin and focus on a message of hope and peace, but to do so is to short-circuit the work of God's revelation. As our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ (Gal 3:24), it must show us our need. We should heed Isaiah's warning (30:9-11),

this *is* a rebellious people, lying children, children *that* will not hear the law of the LORD: 10 Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: 11 Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

We should not soften the Scripture's message of sin. Without that message, people will not repent.

22 they have no cloke for their sin.--In fact, the Lord has come, and spoken, and worked, and so the Lord asserts that they do know themselves to be sinners. They may deny this and protest their innocence, but inwardly they know that they are sinful. In the words of the parallel in v. 24, “they have seen.”

23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.--The Lord's argument here is simple but a bit

compressed. Let's open it up.

1. My “words” and “works” (a) show them their sin (b, d).
2. They don't want to admit their sin, so they hate me (e) for pointing it out. (We call this, shooting the messenger because of the message.)
3. But I didn't make up the message. I simply spoke the words the Father gave me. This has been a major theme throughout the book.
 - a. 3:34, For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God
 - b. 7:16, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.
 - c. 8:28, as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.
 - d. 8:38, I speak that which I have seen with my Father:
 - e. 8:40, But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God:
 - f. 12:49, For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.
 - g. 17:8, have given unto them the words which thou gavest me;
4. So if someone hates me for the message I bring, they are really showing their hatred of the Father (e), who gave me that message.

The distinction between 22 and 24, between words and works, is reflected in sections d and e. In section d, the words most directly reveal their sin, while the works authenticate the Lord as the Father's messenger and thus reveal God. In section e, the sequential ordering (“he that hateth me, hateth my father also”) reflects the Lord's role as messenger sent by the Father, while the parallel association in 24 (“me and my Father”) reflects the peer relation between them.

25 But *this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.*--From Psa 69:4 and 35:19 (cf. v. 7). There was nothing in the Lord intrinsically for them to hate. What they hated was the vision of their own sin that he disclosed to them, and the Father, the constraints of whose law they were not willing to obey.

16:1-6, Summary

In the summary, the Lord reflects on his teaching concerning persecution. Four times he refers explicitly to the process, “I have spoken unto you,” to describe the purpose (negatively and positively), the time, and the result.

1 These things have I spoken unto you.--The following reference to offense shows that “these things” here must refer to the structurally parallel 15:18-26, not the immediately preceding 15:26-27.

that ye should not be offended.--In our modern sense of “offend,” the Lord's words actually *do* offend most people—that is, they make us feel bad. But that's not the sense of the Greek word translated here. “Offend” in the AV NT almost always (29x/33 total) translates *skandalon* or *skandalizw*, which means “cause to stumble.” The Lord warns us in advance of persecution so that when it arrives, we will not be taken by surprise and think that God has abandoned us. Peter no doubt has the Lord's words in mind when he tells us (1 Pet 4:12-13),

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

Rejection for the sake of Christ is the norm, not the exception. We need to be prepared to “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim 2:3). Basic training for soldiers includes a good deal of abuse from the drill sergeant, so that the trainee will be accustomed to opposition and not collapse under fire. The Lord here prepares his people for the pain and toil of the combat.

2 They shall put you out of the synagogues.--Religious people, those who ought to be most alert to the spiritual issues involved, will lead in the persecution. When the church rejects followers of Christ, it is the church that must be judged.

yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.--In fact, this was Paul's attitude. He persecuted the believers out of a sense of divine obligation (Acts 26:9, “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”)

3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. -- Recall 15:21, and the causal chain in 15:18-20, 22-25. They hate us because they hated Christ; they hated him because he represented the Father, whom they also hated.

4 But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.--This is the positive side of v.1. The best way not to be caused to stumble by persecution is to remember that the Lord forewarned us of it.

We are to remember these things **when the time shall come**. Prophecies of persecution are not given for academic speculation, nor to titillate us in best-selling novels, nor that we should be discouraged by dwelling on them. We need to know that the Lord taught these things, but the main application is at the time when persecution comes, to remind us that he has not forsaken us.

And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.--As long as he was there with them, he could guide them through difficult times personally, without the need to prepare them generally to deal with such matters themselves.

5 But now I go my way to him that sent me.--He introduces the theme to which he wishes to move on in 16:16-33. But before he can focus on that, he needs to deal with their mental state.

and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?--We should emphasize the present tense of the verb, “None of you is asking me now.” Peter did ask just this question in 13:36, and Thomas followed up on it in 14:5, but their concern over being left alone has now been overshadowed by their fear of the coming persecution.

6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.--Instead of questions about where *he* is going, they are preoccupied with how *they* will cope with opposition. He would have them “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” and “set [their] affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:1,2). But first he must deal with the sorrow that has overtaken them as a result of his teaching.

Note here two features of the Lord's teaching.

- It is bi-directional. He is sensitive to the effect of his words on his hearers.
- It is modulated. He is not rushing through his notes without regard to what they can handle, but spends more time talking about the Spirit's ministry because of the sorrow that he senses on

their part.

15:26-27; 16:7-15; The Work of the Comforter

This is the third time the Lord has mentioned the Comforter. The previous two were

- 14:16-17, in his response to Philip. The coming of the HS there distinguished the believer from the world: “the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him”
- 14:26, in his response to Judas, describing how he (the Lord) will continue to abide with his disciples.

Now he focuses on the role of the Spirit in bearing witness. In the summary introduction (15:26-27), he compares that witness with the witness that the disciples are to bear, while in the exposition (16:7-15), he focuses on the Spirit's witness, first toward the world, then toward believers. The synthesis is that believers are able to bear witness (15:27) because of the witness of the Spirit to them (16:12-15).

15:26-27, Summary

The key term here is “testify” (26) or “bear witness” (27), the same Greek term in both cases. The Lord introduces the Spirit's work as witness by relating it to the work of the disciples. Their witness in a hostile world will not be alone; it will be accompanied by a supernatural partner. In both cases (the Spirit's witness and that of the disciples), the qualifications of the witness are given.

26, The Spirit's Qualifications

The Lord qualifies the Spirit with four phrases that fall into two categories: his titles, and his origin.

The two *titles* are **Comforter** and **Spirit of truth**, the same that the Lord used in introducing the Spirit's work in 14:16,17.

- “Comforter” is *parakl8tos* “advocate, representative,” emphasizing *what* he does, representing the Lord to us and ministering to us now as the Lord did before his return.
- “Spirit of Truth” emphasizes *how* he does this work, as detailed in 14:26,
“he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

John's first title for the Messiah is “the Word of God,” and the Word's ongoing presence with us is provided by means of the Spirit's work in recalling the teachings of the Messiah to us.

The Lord here makes two statements about the Spirit's *origin*, supplementing a third given earlier in 14:16.

- 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and **he shall give** you another Comforter, (the Father gives)
- 15:26a, whom **I will send** unto you from the Father (the Son sends)
- 15:26b, which **proceedeth** from the Father (the Spirit proceeds)

The coming of the Comforter is the work of the entire godhead, but all three references mention the Father. Like the Son during his earthly ministry, the Spirit comes in the full authority of the Father,

with intimate knowledge of the Father's will and purpose. This is what enables him for his testimony.

27, The Disciples' Qualifications

Like the Spirit, the disciples are to **bear witness**. Their qualification is that they **have been with me from the beginning**. The early church recognized this in selecting a replacement for Judas:

Acts 1:21-22 21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

Thus as the world of the first century opposed believers, it did so in the face of a twofold witness: from the Spirit who has full knowledge of and authority from the Father, and from the disciples who have comprehensive experience of the Son.

This verse says that the original disciples are able to bear witness because they were eyewitnesses of the incarnate Christ. We have not had this experience. Should we then be witnesses for the Lord? And if so, on what basis?

Let's consider first the *duty* of our witness. Several texts make clear that the responsibility for speaking out for the Lord did not die with the disciples, but continues to those who did not have the experience of living with him during his earthly sojourn.

- Philip, called “the evangelist” (Acts 21:8), was a Greek Jew, chosen to serve in Acts 6, with no evidence of or qualification by past experience with the incarnate Christ.
- Eph 4:11 lists “evangelists” with “pastors and teachers” as distinct from the “apostles,” an ongoing role in the church, which the Gentile Ephesians were evidently to expect to find among themselves.
- Timothy was a child of the diaspora, from Lystra in Asia Minor, born to a Jewish mother and a Greek father. Paul exhorts him in his second epistle,
 - 2:2 “the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (note the anticipation of a third generation)
 - 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.
 - 4:5 do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.
- Peter exhorts his readers, who are dispersed Jews, 1 Pet 3:15, sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

So we are to bear witness for the Lord, even though we did not experience him physically. But the condition of John 15:27 is still extremely important for us. It gives us the *basis* for our witness. The church's witness is to be based on the historical facts of the Lord's life, death, and resurrection. When we witness for the Lord, we are not witnessing to our feelings, but to the great historical facts that have been passed down to us. This was also recognized in the first century.

- Recall the exhortations to Timothy: “the things **that thou has heard** of me” (2:2); “preach **the**

word” (4:2).

- Similarly, Peter encourages those whom he has urged to “give a reason” with a reminder of the eyewitness account that he gave them:

2 Pet 1:16-18 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

- Perhaps the most eloquent evidence of this is the opening of Luke's gospel. He himself was not an eyewitness, yet his gospel is the longest of the four. Its basis was the testimony of others concerning the historical Jesus. In Luke 1:1-4, “which” in v.2 refers to “they,” not “us” (nominative case, not accusative).

Luke 1:1-4 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; 3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, 4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

Today, we cannot say that we have been with Jesus from the beginning, but the Spirit continues his work of testimony through us, as we pass on to others the good news that we have received.

So: the point of the summary is that the world's hostility is to be met with a twofold witness: that of the Spirit, and that of believers (in the first instance, the disciples).

16:7-16, Detail

The Lord repeats the theme of the twofold witness, but now shows how the two are in fact one. The witness of the disciples will be the result of the work of the Spirit in and through them. He begins and ends, chiastically, with a reminder that this gift of the Spirit requires his departure to the Father, an anticipation of 16:17-33.

7, *Why the Lord must Leave*

7 Nevertheless.--The contrast is with v. 6. To understand the nature of the contrast fully, consider the flow, and note the clear alternation across the paragraph boundary:

	The Lord's speech	Their Response
Verse 6	because I have said these things unto you,	sorrow hath filled your heart.
Verse 7	I tell you the truth;	It is expedient for you that I go away:

Clearly, the contrast is not between “I tell you the truth” and what has gone before. Rather, it is between their response and the real implications of his departure.

I tell you the truth.--This functions adverbially, almost like a “verily, verily.” We might paraphrase

the flow, “Nevertheless, in spite of your sorrow, it is expedient for you that I go away—really, I mean it, even though it seems impossible.” Cf. Luke 4:25 and 9:27.

It is expedient for you.--The Lord may be making a point of his sovereignty over the High Priest here. John only uses this verb three times in all of his writings. The first is in 11:50, where Caiaphas tells his colleagues, “it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not” (and John notes that in spite of himself, he is prophesying correctly). The third is in 18:14, referring to Caiaphas' statement. The Lord may be saying, “To judge by your sorrow, one would think that you agree with the Jews, who think that they have the upper hand over me. But they are not the ones who win in this context. You are. My departure, including my death, really is for your benefit, and should not lead you to sorrow.”

that I go away.--Not just his death, as Caiaphas thought, but his departure from the earth to the Father.

for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.--This statement would stimulate their curiosity. Why won't he come? The contrast explains.

if I depart, I will send him unto you.--Why does the coming of the Spirit depend on the Lord's departure? The key is in the words “depart” and “send.”

depart.--The change in English from “go away” to “depart” reflects a change in the underlying Greek verb. “Depart” *poreuomai* has a metaphorical use that is not attested in the NT for “go away” *aperxomai*, “to die.” The coming of the Spirit requires not just the Lord's absence from the disciples, but his death.

send.--The Lord's agency in the coming of the Spirit reflects 14:16, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter.”

Putting these together, we see that the Spirit cannot come until the Son asks the Father for him, and the Son can't ask the Father until the Son has died. His death plays two roles in the coming of the Spirit.

1. It fulfills his obedience to the Father, in response to which the Father will grant him whatever he asks.
2. It removes our sin, so that we can be fit receptacles for the Spirit of God.

8-11, The Witness of the Spirit

Following the summary in 15:26-27, we learn more now of the witness of the Spirit and of our witness. These are closely related, but subtly distinct.

8 And when he is come.--Now he amplifies 15:26, explaining just how the Spirit will testify of Christ.

he will reprove the world.--To us, he is a comforter. But to the world, he is a reprover, which is why they hate him and all those through whom he works. We should pay attention to the verb and the object.

To **reprove** is to scold, to point out what's wrong with someone's life. David Carson (whose 1979 JBL article this exposition largely follows) points out that “reprove” is a combination of “to convince of” and “to convict of.”

- “Convict” focuses on the subject of the reproof, which is guilt. By itself, the word is ambiguous. It might mean “convict in absentia,” establish the objective guilt of the defendant without making them aware of it. Or it might include the idea of communicating that guilt to them.

- We add “convince” to emphasize (as in all NT uses of the term) that guilt is communicated, not just proven. But “convince” by itself is incomplete, since it does not include the notion of guilt.

The **world** is sometimes neutral in John, but mostly negative, and never refers explicitly to believers. The Lord is here amplifying 15:26, telling how the HS testifies of him in an unbelieving world.

of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.--His reproof focuses on three topics, amplified in what follows. The amplification of each turns on the word *hoti*, translated “because.” This term makes what follows it an adverbial clause, modifying a previous verb, and the only available verb is “reprove.” In other words, the “because” clauses tell why it is that the Comforter is going to reprove the world.

An alternative translation, “that,” is possible, and makes sense in each of the three explanations individually. However, it requires understanding the relation between the world and the main topic of each verse differently, which runs counter to the strong symmetry among them. I prefer Carson's explanation of the adverbial use of the phrase, which is after all what our AV uses.

9 Of sin.--The first verse is the easiest, partly because we have a parallel to the first half elsewhere in John, in 8:46, where the Lord says to the Jewish leaders,

Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?

The sin we're talking about is the sin of the person under discussion. The Jews could not convict the Lord of sin, but the Spirit will convict the world of sin.

because they believe not on me.--If this verse stood by itself, we could understand the conjunction as appositional, which would define their sin as unbelief. That teaching would not be wrong: unbelief is sin. But it's difficult to apply that interpretation consistently across the three verses, so let's explore the adverbial sense. “The Comforter will reprove the world of sin, and he must do this because they do not believe on me. If he did not intervene, their unbelief would hide their own sin from them.” Lack of belief does not here *define* their sin, but explains why the Comforter must bring it to their attention. He is building on what he taught in chapter 3:19-21:

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Jesus was the light, showing men their sin, but they refused to come to the light in order to avoid having their deeds reproved. God could have left them in this state of darkness and condemnation. Instead, he graciously sends his Spirit to deliver the reproof that they are trying to desperately to avoid.

10 Of righteousness.--This is the most difficult of the three verses. It is common to explain that while the sin of v. 9 and the judgment of v. 11 are the world's sin and judgment, the righteousness here must be Christ's righteousness, given the explanatory clause. His resurrection and ascension will force them to acknowledge that he is righteous. But this deviates from the general sense of “convict someone of something” that the “something” should pertain to the person being convicted. “Rebuke” does not mean simply “convince,” but also “convict of a shortcoming.” How is “righteousness” their shortcoming?

The scriptures often use “righteousness” to describe the defective claim that people make to satisfy God's standards. Consider

Isa 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all **our righteousnesses** are as filthy rags; a

Rom 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish **their own righteousness**, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Matt 5:20 , except your righteousness shall exceed **the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees**, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Phil 3:8-9 I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having **mine own righteousness**, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Man's righteousness is defective. Consider the Jews in John.

- They were zealous of their temple, but defiled it by turning it into a cheating market, ch. 2.
- They were zealous in keeping the Sabbath, yet could not appreciate the healing of the lame man, ch. 5.
- They were zealous of the law of Moses, yet try to kill Jesus, 7:19.

The world's righteousness is as bad as its sin, and it needs to be convicted of both. It's relatively easy for people to accept that their sin is wrong, but very difficult for them to recognize that their religious efforts are abhorrent to God. The Spirit undertakes to show them the defective state of their righteousness.

Why must he do this? The adverbial clause gives the answer:

because I go to my Father.--Up until this point, a major part of the Lord's ministry has been devoted to showing the Jews the inadequacy of their own righteousness. He does this not just by pointing out their shortcomings, but also by his own example of unassailable virtue and true obedience to the law of God (15:22, 24). Now he is leaving, so the Spirit must take up this work.

11 Of judgment.--Again, it is the world's judgment that is in view, their condemnation not only of Jesus but of everything else on which they have defective views. The Lord rebuked them of this earlier in John (7:24):

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Carson: "The world is wrong in its assessment of all things spiritual." So they need conviction here as well.

Note the progression in what a person must lay aside or "count loss" (Phil 3:8):

- Sin, falling short of God's law (Rom 3:23). Most people will acknowledge that sin exists and needs to be repented of. But they do not recognize their own shortcomings.
- Righteousness, people's own efforts to do good things. It's really hard for people to disown their man-made attempts at pleasing God.
- Judgment, the very capacity to tell right from wrong. This is the hardest thing of which to repent. Conviction of our judgment means that we recognize we are totally bankrupt in the moral sphere.

People need to recognize not only that they have broken God's law, and that their own efforts at righteousness are hopelessly corrupted, but that even their ability to make a spiritual assessment is defective.

because the prince of this world is judged.--Judgment is a process by which a person applies the standards of an authority to some matter under discussion. The world's defective judgment is based on the authority of Satan, under whose rule they live. But with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, Satan himself has been judged and found wanting. The time has now come for his subjects to acknowledge the defectiveness of their own judgment, and the Spirit will bring this reproof to them.

The world shows its rebellion against the Lord in three ways:

- its sin against God's law,
- its self-centered claim to righteousness,
- its superficial, exterior judgment of spiritual things.

During the Lord's life, he condemned its sin, provided a counterexample of true righteousness, and confronted them with the superficial nature of their judgment. Now he is leaving, and sending the Spirit to bear witness to this wicked world. In the process of that witness, the Spirit will convince and convict the world of its rebellious sin, its artificial righteousness, and its superficial judgment.

12-15, *The Witness of the Disciples*

We saw in the summary that both the Spirit and the disciples are to bear witness. The Lord has amplified the testimony of the Spirit in 8-11, and now he returns to the disciples. In doing so, he focuses not on their witness, but on how the Spirit will enable them. Thus he shows explicitly what was only implicit in 26-27: these are not two distinct and independent witnesses. Rather, the witness of the disciples is empowered by the Spirit. Compare the synoptic teaching in Matt 10:19-20,

But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. ²⁰ For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

There is, though, an important difference in focus. The role of the Spirit is to reprove the world, to show them their sin. But to us he shows the riches that Christ has provided for us, the “things of mine” that the Father has given to him, and we then can offer them in Christ's name to unbelievers.

12 I have yet many things to say unto you.--The Lord's earthly teaching was incomplete. That's why the NT consists of more than just the gospels. He had given them what they were able to bear, but much more was needed.

Compare this with 15:15, “all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” He has completed the revelation that the Father sent him to deliver, during his earthly ministry, but he knows that they will need more. What comes later will come directly from him, exalted in glory.

Gill suggests that this additional teaching focuses on the distinctive character of the church. Compare Paul's words about the mystery in Eph 3:3-6,

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

but ye cannot bear them now.--Gill: “because of their prejudices in favour of their own nation, the

law of Moses, and the ceremonies of it, and the setting up of a temporal kingdom.” They have enough difficulty dealing with what he has already given them, that the Jewish messiah must suffer as well as reign. To contemplate that his salvation goes beyond Judaism would really blow them away.

There is an important principle here for teachers. Just because something is true doesn't mean that any time is the appropriate time to present it. We must be sensitive to what people can handle, and not give them more than they have the capacity to bear. A teacher must know what not to say as well as what to say, and when.

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.--Consider first the process, then the recipients, and finally the contents.

He will **guide** you.--He did not just dump the revelation on them all at once, but led them into it step by step. Paul received revelation about the nature of the church when he wrote to Corinth and Ephesus; Peter was given special understanding of persecution when he wrote his epistles, and so forth. The experiences they had in the book of Acts prepared them for what they received, gave them an appetite for it, and showed them how to apply it. God's teaching is always situated, and we who teach today should remember this example.

He will **guide you**.--Who are the “you” who are in view here? As we saw in 15:27, the primary reference here is to the eleven, who had direct personal experience of the Lord. This is a special promise of Spirit-delivered revelation for the apostles. It forms the foundation for our confidence in the NT writings, which were received by the church largely because they were understood to be written by the apostles.

All truth.--To the apostles, the HS committed all the revelation that we require. There still remain “the secret things” that “belong to the Lord our God” (Deut 29:29), but everything that needs to be revealed is here promised to the eleven. This verse thus guarantees not only the *authority* of our NT, but also *its completeness*. In the writings of the apostles we have “all truth.” This gives the lie to Islam, Mormonism, and neo-gnosticism, all of which claim that post-apostolic writings form a necessary part of the truth that God has for believers in this age.

Our understanding of the following verses is enhanced if we attend to the structure.

John 16:13	John 16:14
for he shall not speak of himself;	He shall glorify me:
but whatsoever he shall hear, <i>that</i> shall he speak:	for he shall receive of mine,
and he will shew <i>anaggelw</i> you things to come.	and shall shew <i>anaggelw</i> it unto you.

Let's consider these pairs.

(13) for he shall not speak of himself.--The point is not that he doesn't talk about himself. In fact, the revelation that he has given says a great deal about himself (cf. the “flesh/spirit” contrast we considered on Pentecost). Rather, it means that the source of what he reveals is someone else. Literally, he does not speak “from” himself, of his own initiative. Note the parallel between the Spirit's relation to Jesus and our Lord's relation to the Father. In 7:16ff, the Lord said,

My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. ¹⁷ If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be **of God**, or *whether I speak of myself*. ¹⁸ He that **speaketh of himself** seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no

unrighteousness is in him.

Just as the Lord delivered the Father's message to us, so the Spirit will deliver the Son's new revelation. The Spirit is indeed "another comforter of the same kind" as the Son, delivering heavenly truth on behalf of the one who sent him.

In 7:18, the Lord observed, "he that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory." Because the Spirit does not "speak of himself" (v. 13), the Lord can say,

(14) He shall glorify me.--Just as the source of the Spirit's teaching comes from someone behind him and not from himself, so its content focuses, not on the Spirit, but on the Lord Jesus. This verse is an important warning against any sect or movement that focuses attention more on the Spirit than on the Son.

(13) but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.--The positive side of "he shall not speak of himself." The emphasis is that he delivers what he has heard. Compare again the Lord's words in 15:15, all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

The same point is made in the corresponding clause of v. 14,

(14) for he shall receive of mine.--The things that the exalted Jesus has and gives to the Spirit to convey to us. Thus Paul emphasizes our completeness in Christ:

Col 2:9-10 ⁹ For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. ¹⁰ And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

We receive Christ's righteousness. We enjoy his access to the Father. We are indwelt and empowered by his spirit. All that we have of any value consists of the things of Christ.

(13) and he will shew you things to come; (14) and shall shew it unto you.--The parallel shows that we should understand the sense here more broadly than just of remote eschatology (as in the title of Pentecost's text),. It includes

- the mystery of which Paul speaks in Ephesians,
- the advent of the new covenant enjoyed by the church without regard to racial background,
- the things that they were not able to bear up to this point because of their purely Jewish perspective.

Indeed, there is a continuity between these things and more remote future events, but it is a mistake to restrict the promise just to the events surrounding the second coming.

15 All things that the Father hath are mine.--Almost an exact quotation of what the father in the parable of the prodigal son says to the elder son, who has protested his virtuous service to the father and is told that in view of this obedience he is entitled to all that the father has. The selfish bitterness of the elder son in the parable directly represents the Pharisees, but his role as the obedient son with a claim on all that the father has is completely appropriate to the Lord Jesus. This is the same theme we see in Phil 2:9-11, the enrichment of the Son because of his obedience to the Father.

We can imagine a reformed version of the parable, in which the elder son, far from being bitter, would welcome the returning prodigal and adorn him for presentation to the Father. This is how our Savior has treated us—and how we in turn should treat those who, smarting from the Spirit's rebuke, come to us seeking healing and comfort.

therefore said I.--Christ's access to the things of God as his own possession is the foundation for his promise, "he shall take of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you."

This, then, is how the church's witness proceeds. It is the Spirit's task to reprove the world of their sin, the inadequacy of their own righteousness and their inability to judge righteous judgment. But then that same Spirit displays to us the riches that God has prepared for us in Christ, and we can then offer these, the ring and the robe and the shoe, to those who hear his call to repent.

16, The Lord's Departure and Return

Originally, I assigned this verse to the next section. That section is built around the disciples' question about these statements. But I've changed my mind, for three reasons.

1. There are none of the usual markers of a discourse break: no shift in the speaker, no repetition of his name, no change of scene, no discontinuous particle.
2. On the contrary, v. 17 is a fine division: a change of speaker, with a repetition of the sentence that causes us to pause and then pick up again.
3. Though v. 16 focuses on the theme of 17-33, its topics are not foreign to what has gone before. The Lord has already said, in the current section (v. 10), that they will not see him and that he is going to the Father, and as we shall see, the coming of the Spirit is one aspect of what it means for them to see him again.
4. Thus understood, the verse makes a nice internal inclusio with v. 7, which also talks about his departure and the coming of the Spirit.

So we should consider this verse a part of 7-16, but also (because of how it forms the basis for the disciples' question) a transition to the next section. Here as often (e.g., 1 Cor 11), the core theme of one section appears at the end of the previous section.

We need to consider one phrase and three clauses.

16 A little while.--This phrase is characteristically John's—the English phrase variously translates *mikron* (here and the next three verses), *eti mikron* (13:33; 14:19; OT Jer 51:33, greek 28:33; Hos 1:4), and *eti xronon mikron* or *eti mikron xronon* (7:33; 12:35). It is part of John's record of the Lord's patience. We have noticed before the emphasis on the Lord's "hour," which early in the gospel had not yet come (2:4 "woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come"; 7:30; 8:20), but then finally arrives with his passion (12:23, 27; 13:1 "when Jesus knew that his hour was come"; 17:1, "Father, the hour is come.") Our Lord lived his life with the sense of a divine timetable. In the words of his ancestor David, "all of them were written, the days were formed, when as yet there was none of them" (Psa 139:16). Now he enjoins this same sense of patience and trust in the Father's timetable on his disciples. "Don't become impatient, either with the culmination of my ministry, or with my return to you. It's only a little while."

As we get older, time seems to pass more quickly. When we are young, and have experienced the changes of the seasons only a few times, Christmas seems to take forever to arrive. Now the Christmases flicker past like cars on a train while we sit at the crossing. We know that the routine is fixed, the novelty has worn off, and it occupies less space in our attention.

In the same way, as we gain confidence in the Lord's calendar, we can wait patiently for his time, knowing that it is only "a little while."

and ye shall not see me.--This is unambiguous. It refers to the Lord's coming passion, burial, and

ultimately, his ascent to the Father.

and again, a little while, and ye shall see me.--This is more ambiguous. There are three possibilities:

1. His resurrection.
2. The coming of the Spirit on Pentecost.
3. His return at the end of the age.

In the context of this section, where the focus is on the Spirit, the second seems in view (and offers a nice inclusio with v. 7). However, as we saw when we studied 14:18, these three are best viewed as three phases of one ongoing process by which the Lord, rejected at Calvary, forces his way back into the world, displacing the prince of this world, whom he has condemned.

- At first he comes physically, visible only to a few, who even then were fearful and withdrawn (Acts 1:13).
- Then he comes through the Spirit (14:23), indwelling believers and enabling them to be salt and light in a sinful world.
- One day he will come in the fulness of his power, and “every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him” (Rev 1:7).

This more extended meaning is supported by a shift in the verb for “to see.” The verb in the first half of the verse may refer either to merely physical sight, or to spiritual insight. It is semantically unmarked. This verb is used exclusively in John of deeper spiritual sight, and its contrast here with the other focuses the other more on physical sight. “Shortly, you will lose physical sight of me, but a little after that, you will see me in a far deeper and more spiritual sense.”

because I go to the Father.--All phases of his triumphant return are possible only because of his return to the Father. Phil 2:8,9 traces the Father's exaltation of him to his obedience unto death. By dying for our sins,

- he put them away so that he could rise;
- he ratified the new covenant by which the Spirit is given;
- he earned the place at the Father's right hand from which he waits until his enemies are made his footstool (Psa 110), so that he can return in triumph.

16:17-33, The Lord's Departure and Return

As at 13:36, the transition from one section to the next is marked by a question from the disciples on something the Lord has said in the previous section. The interchange has two rounds.

17-28, First Round

17, The Disciples' Questions

17 Then said *some* of his disciples among themselves.--Note that their observations are private. They recognize that these phrases have recurred throughout the Lord's words, and don't want to admit to him that they don't understand them.

A careful reading of the last “and” shows that their first question divides the Lord's statement into two parts, not three,. The first concerns his departure and return, and the second concerns his return to the Father.

18 They said therefore.--Their second question concerns the adverb “a little while.”

19-28, The Lord's Answers

He responds point by point to the two aspects of their first question, but only indirectly to their second, by comments made in the course of answering the first question.

19 ... they were desirous to ask him.--Then why didn't they? Probably because they were ashamed to acknowledge their ignorance.

19 Now Jesus knew ...Here as previously the Lord knows men's thoughts before they utter them. Compare

- 1:47, 48, his discernment of Nathanael's piety;
- 2:24, he knew all men
- 4:29, he knew the thoughts of the woman at the well
- 5:42 he discerned the Jews' lack of love for God
- 6:64 he knew who should betray him

In Rev 2:23, the Lord Jesus calls himself, “He which searcheth the reins and hearts.” This is tantamount to a claim to deity, for Jehovah claims in Jer 17:10, “I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins.” Cf. also 1 Chr 28:9; Psa 44:21; 139:23.

20-23a, Departure and Return

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you.--This introduction occurs again at 23b, and thus introduces two sections of the response. The first explains the saying about his departure and return. The second turns to their question about his going to the Father.

This section is built around a four-fold contrast between sorrow and joy. In all cases, the sorrow is theirs, but the joy shifts from the world's in v. 20 to theirs in the last three.

Sorrow	Joy
ye shall weep and lament,	but the world shall rejoice:
and ye shall be sorrowful,	but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.
21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come:	But ... she remembereth no more the anguish, as soon as she is delivered of the child, for joy that a man is born into the world.
22 And ye now therefore have sorrow:	but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. 23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing.

The overarching point of this section is that the Lord does not hide from them the sorrow that will be their lot, but repeatedly tells them about it so that they will not be surprised. Compare 16:1. A gospel of prosperity and comfort may attract more hearers at first, and they will “for a while believe,” but “in time of temptation fall away.” To guard against this, the Lord here provides his disciples with detailed instruction on the very practical matter of sorrow.

First Contrast: Their Sorrow and the World's Joy. Their sorrow is Distinctive.

The first contrast is synchronic: it deals with attitudes at one moment in time. It is concerned only with his departure. It will bring them bitter sorrow, but the world will rejoice over it.

ye shall weep and lament.--He does seek to hide from them the intense sorrow they will feel. “Weep” refers to the outward sign of shedding tears; “lament” might also be translated “mourn” and refers to the inner distress that leads to the outward tears.

There may be a parallel with Jeremiah's feeling at the fall of Jerusalem—Lam 1:1 begins in the Greek Bible (not in the Hebrew) with the statement that “Jeremias sat weeping, and lamented *with* this lamentation over Jerusalem.” In both cases, the mourner has been deprived of something he loved. In their case,

but the world shall rejoice.--The first contrast is with the world. The very departure that so pains them will be regarded by the world as their triumph.

The general lesson from this contrast is that as God's children, we should not expect to share the world's joys, or have the world sympathize with our sorrows. We are strangers and pilgrims, and our alien nature will show itself in how we and the world differ in what brings us joy and sorrow. Our standards of enjoyment, like our standards of wisdom (1 Cor 2), are completely reversed.

Their Sorrow and Their Own Joy. Their sorrow is Purposeful.

Now we come to the second contrast. This one moves through time—it is diachronic. The Lord contrasts the sorrow they will feel when he leaves, with the joy they will experience when he returns after “a little while.”

and ye shall be sorrowful.--Yet another word describing their sadness. This one is a passive verb: “you shall be vexed, offended, insulted.” So it adds yet another dimension to the description of their distress, derived from the world's cruel rejoicing. The mourning they feel will be due to the actions of others, in this case, those who tear their Lord from them.

but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.--He does not say that their sorrow will be replaced with joy, or that the coming joy will overwhelm the sorrow, but that the sorrow itself will become joy. They will realize that what had so distressed them is actually the source of their greatest joy.

This promise is important to us both in this specific case and as a more general lesson.

In this specific case: what will so greatly offend them is the execution of their Lord as a criminal, at the instigation of the temple leaders. But in fact, his death as a criminal before the heavenly court that the temple represented was the means of our salvation, for “his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Pet 2:24).

More generally, our heavenly Father both loves us intensely, and is all-powerful. The only sorrows that he will allow into our lives are those that he purposes to turn into joy. This is the explicit promise of

Rom 8:28, “all things work together for good to them that love God,” “we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Rom 5:3-4), and many other texts. We can expect to repeat Joseph's testimony in Gen 50:20, “ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good,” if we adopt our Savior's resolve in Heb 12:2, “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

The Example of the Woman in Travail. Their sorrow is Precedented.

Now he illustrates this principle from daily life.

21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow.--Throughout Scripture, birth pangs are paradigmatic of sorrow and woe (Isa 26:17,18; Jer 30:6; Hos 13:13; Mic 4:10). Now he uses this instance of sorrow to illustrate what they can expect. This phenomenon illustrates both the nature of the sorrow and the nature of the deliverance.

because her hour is come.--The nature of the sorrow is that it is part of a plan. It is not an accident, but integral to the process of child-birth. “Her hour is come.” It is not unexpected or unnatural.

Just so, the sorrow that they will experience is not a cosmic accident or evidence that God has lost control, but simply one aspect of the Lord's long-appointed hour that has finally arrived.

This part of the teaching bears on his use of “a little while” to describe both his departure and his return. These things are part of God's plan, and will unfold as scheduled.

but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish.--Now he describes the point at which her sorrow is turned into joy.

for joy that a man is born into the world.--The example precisely fits the statement of v. 20b. The sorrow of labor is not incidental or unnecessary, but the very mechanism by which the mother comes to experience the joy of a new baby.

Some may argue that the pain of childbirth is not necessary; it is the result of our first parents' sin in the Eden. Of course, that is true—but so is all sorrow and pain, including the sorrow for which the Lord is preparing the disciples.

Their Sorrow and Joy, Explained. Their sorrow is Temporary.

22 And ye now therefore have sorrow.--Now the first half of the contrast changes. It is no longer in the future tense (like 20a and 20b), but in the present. The “little while” is upon them. His words of warning, while entirely salutary (16:1), have already filled them with sorrow (cf. 16:6).

But now he amplifies the description of their contrasting joy with a little chiasm.

- The first panel is positive, the second is stated negatively.
- The outward members describe the causes of their joy, while the inner ones present the result.

	Positive	Negative
Cause	I will see you again ↓	in that day ye shall ask me nothing
Effect	your heart shall rejoice →	↑ your joy no man taketh from you

but I will see you again.--The statement is remarkable. The expression he is expounding is, “a little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me” (v. 19). Yet he speaks, not of their seeing him, but of his seeing them.

But isn't this the heart of walking by faith, not by sight (2 Cor 5:7)? The flesh wants to see Christ, to be reassured by his physical presence. The spirit is content to know that he sees us. Compare Gal 4:9, “but now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God ...”

and your heart shall rejoice.--Here is the positive statement of the result. With the assurance that he is watching over them, they will enter into the joy he promised in v. 20.

and your joy no man taketh from you.--Now he states the result negatively. In a few hours, they will experience sorrow at the hands of wicked men (v. 20). But when he returns to them, no one will be able to take their joy from them. The great illustration of this principle is the book of Philippians, which has the highest frequency of references to “joy” and “rejoice” (20 out of 2190 words in the AV, nearly 1%), yet is written from a Roman prison. This is not to say that Paul was a sadist or enjoyed prison. It was inconvenient, and no doubt sometimes painful. But that was incidental to the deep joy that he experienced in the assurance of the Lord's care for him.

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing.--Here is the negative cause. They will no longer feel the confusion that led to their question in v. 19. The verb here has the sense of “ask a question,” not “make a request” as does the different verb in the second half of the verse. When he comes to them in the person of the Spirit, they will “need not that any man teach” them (1 John 2:27). They will no longer be perplexed, but will have the spiritual resources to carry on in the face of the world's opposition.

23b-28, The Father

Verily, verily, I say unto you.--The verse division is unfortunate. By repeating the introductory formula from v. 20, he alerts them that he is turning to a new section of his response, dealing now with his saying about the Father.

His comments about the Father focus on their requests to the Father and his revelation to them from the Father's side. The pair appears twice:

	Past-Future Contrast	Focus on the Future
Their requests to the Father in Jesus' name	Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give <i>it</i> you. 24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.	26 At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: 27 For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.
His new revelation to them from the Father	25 These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh , when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.	28 I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

He explained his departure and return in terms of its results, the sorrow and joy it would bring. Now he explains “because I go to the Father” in the same way, by focusing on the consequences of his departure. Those consequences are two-fold: their direct access to the Father, and an enhancement in his revelation to them. In the first panel he emphasizes the contrast between the time of his earthly sojourn and the coming era of his heavenly session; in the second he focuses only on the future.

It's worth trying to figure out the logical relation implicit in “because.” His going to the Father enables many things—our redemption, the sending of the Spirit, etc. However, in the context here, these two activities (prayer and revelation) are not so much *enabled* by his departure as *required* by it. Because he isn't there, they will have to function without him, and these two things show how that function takes place.

First Theme: Prayer in the Name of the Son

Let's consider the two instances of this together.

23b-24, First Instance

23b Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name,--The same promise as in 15:16 (in a section on abiding in him, the relation between the Lord and his people) and 14:13 (a section on conflict with the world). This promise supports all three of the themes in the URD.

he will give *it* you.--Contrast 14:13f, “I will do it.” The Lord here (and in 15:16) emphasizes the immediacy of their access to the Father.

24 Hitherto.--In the first panel, he emphasizes the temporal contrast between how things were during his earthly ministry, and what they will be like after his departure.

have ye asked nothing in my name.--In fact, we have no record of the disciples' asking the Father for anything during the Lord's earthly ministry. They addressed their requests to Jesus. But now they will go, not to him, but directly to the Father, in his name.

ask, and ye shall receive.--Cf. Matt 7:7 “ask, seek, knock,” 21:22. This is the fullest assurance he can give them that they will be cared for after he departs. He will not be there physically to care for them, but he grants them direct access to the Father, who has provided for his needs during his ministry, and assures them that the Father will answer their requests.

that your joy may be full.--This verse is often quoted by itself, as though the Lord were promising to grant all our desires so that we could be happy. In the context, the reference to “joy” is a link to the previous paragraph. They must pass through sorrow, but the answers that the Father will give to their prayers will bring them joy that will overcome the sorrow.

26-27, Second Instance

Now the temporal contrast is gone. He simply looks ahead to the time when they will access the Father directly.

26 At that day ye shall ask in my name.--What about “that day” will lead to a change in their prayer habits?

Gill suggests that the increase in their prayer will be due to the ministry of the Spirit, whom they will receive. On Jude 20, he writes,

the Holy Ghost is the author and enditer of prayer, and an assister in it; without him saints cannot call God their Father, nor pray with faith and fervency, or with freedom and liberty.

And on Zech 12:10,

he is called the "Spirit of supplications"; because he indites the prayers of his people, shows

them their wants, and stirs them up to pray; enlarges their hearts, supplies them with arguments, and puts words into their mouths; gives faith, fervency, and freedom, and encourages to come to God as their Father, and makes intercession for them, according to the will of God.

Compare:

- Zech 12:10 promises that in the Messianic age, God will “pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications.”
- Eph 6:18 and Jude 1:20 tell us that we are to “pray ... in the Spirit.”
- Rom 8:15 tells us that it is by “the spirit of adoption” that we are able to “cry 'abba, Father'.” Cf. Gal 4:6.
- Rom 8:26 reminds us, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you.--Be careful not to misunderstand this sentence.

- He does not say, “I will not pray the Father for you.” His intercessory work is clearly taught in Heb 7:25.
- Rather, he is deemphasizing the importance of this intercession. “Don't think that I need to be there to ask the Father on your behalf. You can go directly.”

He goes on to explain why they can boldly come to the Father:

27 For the Father himself loveth you.--He wants to assure them of the Father's good pleasure toward them. “Love” here is not *agapē*, as in 1 John 4:19 (“we love him because he first loved us”), but *filew*. *Agapaw* is the verb used to describe God's elective love, as in

1 Thess 1:4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

1 Thess 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

filew emphasizes rather affection and friendliness. He is assuring them that the Father is kindly disposed toward them. This disposition results from their faith, which manifests itself in two ways:

because ye have loved me.--The first manifestation of their faith is their love for the Lord Jesus. The very fact that they will be distressed at his departure indicates their love for him. So great is the Father's love for his son, that he loves those who love his son.

and have believed that I came out from God.--The second manifestation of their faith is their recognition of his messiahship, his divine authority. There are many who are attracted to Jesus as a moral figure, but do not accept him as God's Word to mankind. Such enjoy no promise of the Father's favor. But when we receive the Father's messenger, the Father is pleased with us.

This is remarkable. The Father would hear us even without his Son's intercession, because he loves us. Then why does the Son intercede for us? Because he loves us as well. Far from being a hateful, terrifying threat to us, both the Father and the Son overflow with love toward us.

So: the first consequence of his departure to the Father is that they will now go directly to God in

prayer. In the second half of each panel, he introduces the second consequence.

Second Theme: Clear Revelation

Again, we'll consider the two corresponding sections together.

25, First Instance

25 These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs.--He has spoken of preparing a place for them in his Father's house, the heavenly temple (14:2); of their relation to him as branches in the vine (15:5); of the sorrows of a woman in travail (16:21). The reason for this indirect revelation is no doubt given in 16:12, their inability to bear God's revelation in its full directness.

but the time cometh.--The time of his return, of their joy, of their direct access to the Father.

when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs.--He anticipates here the full revelation that the Spirit will grant them, according to the promise in 16:13, guiding them into all truth.

The contrast between their past experience (before the Lord's passion) and what they can expect is very much like the contrast between Moses and the other prophets that the Lord describes in Num 12:6-8.

And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, *I* the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, *and* will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses *is* not so, who *is* faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold:

The new revelation will go far beyond that received by the prophets of old. They themselves will be able, like Moses of old, to ascend Sinai into the very presence of God.

but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.--Literally, "report back to you concerning the Father." He depicts his departure and return as the mechanism for bringing them the latest news from heaven.

28, Second Instance

I came forth ... and am come ...: again, I leave ..., and go ...--Compare the obliqueness of his statement to the Jews in 8:14, "I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go," Or to Nicodemus in 3:13, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven." John earlier spoke plainly of his origin and destiny (13:1, 3), but as the narrator, writing *after* and on the basis of this statement.

The world ... the Father.--From the outset, we have been reminded that the Lord is an alien, separate from this world and only a visitor in it. 1:10 makes that case most starkly—he created it, therefore he existed before it. His true home is with the Father. His entire ministry was an example of life as a stranger and pilgrim, a pattern that we are to follow.

This bald statement is at once

- an example of the plainness of revelation that he promised in the first panel, and
- a recap of the theme of this section, "because I go to my Father."

29-33, Second Round

29-30, The Disciples' Comment

Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.--The emphasis is on “now.” He had promised plain revelation in the future (v. 25), but as our analysis suggests, v. 28 is in fact framed according to this new policy, and they discern its difference from what has gone before.

30 Now are we sure [know] ... by this we believe.--They claim to have clear perception of two details about the Lord. We'll consider the details in a moment, but first, we should think about their claim. Their subsequent behavior shows that they are in fact as yet far from such certainty; consider

- the doubts of Thomas in 20:25 “I will not believe,”
- the Lord's rebuke to the two on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:25 “O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken,”
- the response of the eleven in Luke 24:37 “they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit”

In the next verse, the Lord perceives the shallowness of their faith. But it is worth reflecting how their overly optimistic claim shows the efficacy of the Lord's teaching. Calvin seems to have captured the point of what was going on:

he who has only tasted a little of the doctrine of the Gospel is more inflamed, and feels much greater energy in that small measure of faith, than if he had been acquainted with all the writings of Plato. ... Now the source of their mistake was, that they did not know what the gift of the Holy Spirit would be. They therefore give themselves up to joy before the time, just as if a person should think himself rich with a single gold piece.

Their experience should give us both encouragement and caution:

- We should be encouraged by the intoxicating joy that comes with knowing God and his word. Jer 15:16, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.”
- We should be cautious not to overestimate our own spiritual maturity. 1 Cor 10:12, “let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

we know that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee.--They are referring to the Lord's knowledge of their thoughts, exhibited in vv. 17-19. He does not “need any man to ask” questions in order to “know” what is on their hearts.

They are responding, not so much to the content of what he has said, as to the intimate knowledge it revealed of their own thoughts. This is how the Word of God should grip and impact us. It is well that we “search the scriptures,” to base our faith on what God has actually said and not on our own feelings. But what really grips us is the awareness that the divine author of this book understands each of us deeply and intimately.

By this we believe that thou camest forth from God.--They draw the same conclusion from his knowledge of their thoughts that we drew in our discussion of v. 19. It is God who searches the hearts and reins, the thoughts and emotions. His repeated demonstration of this ability confirms his claim in v. 28 to have “come forth from God.”

Note, though, that they conveniently overlook his parallel claim to “leave the world, and go to the Father.” We see here how their enthusiasm has overtaken their actual spiritual achievement: they focus on the good news, and overlook the extensive and necessary teaching he has given warning them of coming trouble. This same lopsidedness persists today. To remedy this, he focuses in his final words of teaching on the need to be prepared for tribulation.

31-33, The Lord's Response

31 Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?--He who can understand their question before it is asked, can also discern the shallowness of their faith when they voice it. As in 2:24, he knows the limitations of those who say that they believe.

Their enthusiasm over the spiritual power of what they have heard, and his caution to them, are a warning to us in dealing with unbelievers. People may respond to the spiritual power of the Word of God, without actually experiencing the full saving work of the Spirit. In our eagerness to see men turn from darkness to light, we may think that they have come to faith, when in fact (like the disciples) they are only in the early part of the birth process. An example of this error is found in the concluding section of the Four Spiritual Laws and similar tracts, where the prospect is instructed that since he has prayed a prayer to receive the Lord, he is now to think of himself as a Christian.

Instead of cutting the process short by trying to persuade them that they are now believers, we should recognize the dynamics that we see here in the disciples, and proceed more cautiously until the fruit of the Spirit in their lives manifests his presence within them.

The Lord now tempers their enthusiasm by predicting the imminent breakdown in their faith, and then generalizes that tragic experience to provide an encouraging lesson for them going forward.

32, A Specific Example

32 Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come.--The waiting is almost over. The experience he is about to describe is an aspect of his passion, which is fast unfolding.

The event that is upon them is that they will abandon him, but he will draw strength from the Father.

that ye shall be scattered.--The only other place that John uses this term is in 10:12, to describe what happens to the sheep when the wolf comes and the shepherd is not there to protect them. Shortly, he will be taken from them, not through his carelessness (like the hirling shepherd), but through the hatred of men. Then they will be scattered.

every man to his own.--That is, to his own home, as in 19:27. With their center gone, they will not stay together, but will fragment. So much for the knowledge and faith of which they boasted in 29-30.

and shall leave me alone.--Now he invites them to contemplate the effect of their lapse on him. They have been concerned when he said he would leave them. But how will he feel when they leave him? As man, our Savior was subject to discouragement, and needed human fellowship, just as we do. We hear echoes of this at several points:

- 16:5, “none of asketh me, 'Where goest thou?’” Brother Jordan commented a few weeks ago how poignant this comment is;
- The explanation of his passion at the Last Supper, and his desire that they remember him;

- The agony in the garden, Matt 24:40, “Could ye not watch with me one hour?”

and yet I am not alone.--In spite of their faithlessness, he has a resource that will sustain him.

because the Father is with me.--The knowledge of his Father's presence will uphold him even when the world turns against him and they flee.

How can we reconcile this faith with his cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34, quoted from Psa 22:1)? As severe as it was, that separation was only for a moment—like a Dirac delta function, infinitely short but infinitely severe (actually prhps 3 hrs, Mt 27:45).

- Note the tense of the verb. At this moment, the Father is with him, and we see that closeness in the prayer of ch. 17.
- Luke's record of the crucifixion (ch. 23) shows that he was conscious of the Father's care even while he was on the tree:
 - 34, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”
 - 43, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”
 - 46, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (at the very end, showing that whatever breach had occurred, it was now mended).
- Even during the moment of separation, he confesses God as his God. He knew from the moment he entered our world that his mission was “to give his life a ransom for many” (Mat 20:28; Mark 10:45). The very fact of the separation, as painful as it was, showed that the Father was faithfully carrying out the transaction they had together planned.

33, A General Application

33 These things I have spoken unto you.--Everything he has uttered in the upper room, since the start of ch. 13, would be conducive to bringing them peace: the assurance of his love for them and their love toward each other; the preparation for the world's opposition with the promise of the Spirit; the preparation for his departure. But I think the words have special reference to v. 32. He predicts their faithlessness, and the resource he has in the Father, as a specific example to prepare them for what they must expect in years to come.

that in me ye might have peace.--This is only the second time in John that the Lord has mentioned peace. The first time was in 14:27, where he said,

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you:

The peace he promises them is explicitly “my peace.” In view of what he has just said in v. 32, we can understand this as the peace that he himself experienced in the hour of his agony.

Here he promises that this peace will be theirs “in him.” He began ch. 15 with the vivid image of abiding in him so that his life can flow through us. Everything that we enjoy, is his.

- We receive his righteousness.
- We are accepted by the Father because he is.
- The Spirit that enlivens us is the same Spirit that empowered him, and that he has sent to us.
- In the same way, the peace we will experience is the peace he demonstrated during his passion,

forsaken by friend and foe alike but sustained by the Father's faithfulness.

The next two points parallel v. 32.

In the world ye shall have tribulation.--This expression parallels his prediction that they would be scattered and leave him alone. He has already warned them, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you (15:18)." If this world will put him to death, they must expect its animosity as well.

As so often, John here records a dominical teaching that is the basis for Paul's later instruction.

- When he and Barnabas made their way homeward on their first missionary journey through the cities of Galatia, they "exhort[ed the disciples] to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).
- He later wrote the Thessalonians, "For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation" (1 Thes 3:4).

We must not be lulled by our present prosperity into thinking that our lives will always be comfortable. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim 3:12). This is an essential teaching that we dare not ignore. The word "tribulation" in the NT appears 45 times, and 37 of those times it refers to persecution of believers by unbelievers in the present age.

But we must not omit the other side of the coin. In the example on which the Lord builds this teaching, he pointed out that though they would abandon him, yet he was not alone. So now he assures them,

but be of good cheer.--A most interesting expression. In the LXX, when it appears as a translation of Hebrew, it almost universally (10x out of 12) represents the phrase *al tiri* or *al tiru*, "fear not." Yet this phrase is far more often translated *mh fobou* or *mh fobeisqe*. It is striking that a prohibition to fear should be translated positively, as a command to be of good courage, but the two are not synonymous; the Lord uses them together in Matt 14:27, to comfort the disciples who see him walking on the sea, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid." Clearly, "cheer" does not capture the gravity of the word. It is an exhortation to courage and perseverance in the face of otherwise terrifying circumstances, a challenge to go beyond just not fearing, and rise to a level of confidence that only God can give.

I have overcome the world.-- Each word in this clause deserves our attention.

- "The world" is the source of our tribulation, the fallen creation currently under Satan. When we suffer, we are to keep in mind the source of that suffering.
- "Overcome" *nikaw* means literally "conquered." In spite of its great power, the world is vulnerable. It can be conquered.
- "Have overcome." In fact, the Lord looks at its conquest as accomplished. This does not mean it has no teeth; he has just described the tribulation we shall suffer in it. But its prince is cast out (12:31), and the ultimate victory is as certain as if it had already occurred.
- "I." The Lord is the source of this victory. *nikaw* appears 28x in the NT, and all but four are in John. Of those, this is the only one in the gospel. Six occur in 1 John, and the rest (17) are in the Revelation. Remarkably, in most of those we are the subject. But our victory is simply the realization and outworking of our Lord's finished work; Rev 12:11, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." Note the order. First the blood of the Lamb, then our testimony.

Notes

En emoi in John

Ref	Syntax	Who?	Phrase	Notes
6:56	Adv	People	En emoi menei	Preposed to finite verb
10:38	Predicate	Father	En emoi ho pathr	
14:10	Predicate	Father	Ho pathr en emoi estin	
14:11	Predicate	Father	Ho pathr en emoi	
14:20	Predicate	People	Humeis en emoi	
14:30	Adv	Satan	En emoi ouk exei ouden	Preposed
15:2	?	People	Pan klhma en emoi mh feron karpon	
15:4	Adv	People	Mhnate en emoi	
15:4	Adv	People	Ean mh en emoi meinhte	
15:5	Adv	People	Ho menwn en emoi	
15:6	Adv	People	Ean mh tis menhi en emoi	
15:7	Adv	People	Ean meinhte en emoi	
16:33	Adv	People	Hina en emoi eirhnhn exhte	
17:21	Pred	Father	Su, pathr, en emoi	
17:23	Pred	Father	Su en emoi	
1 John, en autw				
2:6	Adv	People	Ho legwn en autw menein	
2:8	Adv	Statement	Ho estin alhqes en autw	
2:27	Adv	People	Meneite en autw	
2:28	Adv	People	Menete en autw	
3:5	Pred	Sin	Hamartia en autw ouk estin	
3:6	Adv	People	Pas ho en autw menwn ouk hamartanei	
3:24	Adv	People	Ho thrwn tas entolas autou en autw menei	
4:13	Adv	People	En autw menomen	

15:8

The minority text makes *ginomai* subjunctive, thus parallel with *ferw* and subordinate to *ina*. Reading it as future (as in the MT) permits reading the verse as a summary to the two explicit metaphors in the section, as I have done.

Conditionals in 15:18ff

Note very high concentration of conditional statements.

Ref	Particle	Protasis	Apodosis	Class
15:18	ei	Indicative present	Imperative present	1
15:19	ei	Indicative imperfect	Indicative imperfect + <i>an</i>	2
15:20a	ei	Indicative aorist	Indicative future	1
15:20b	ei	Indicative aorist	Indicative future	1
15:22	ei	Indicative aorist	Indicative imperfect	1
15:24	ei	Indicative aorist	Indicative imperfect	1
16:7a	ean	Subj aorist	Indicative future	3
16:7b	ean	Subj aorist	Indicative future	3

References to Answered Prayer

Where do they occur in terms of the three themes of the URD?

Love among the Body

John 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Both of these are in the context of abiding in him. Answered prayer is one of the fruits of abiding.

The World's Opposition

John 14:13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do *it*.

Part of the Lord's promise that their works and words will be powerful

Return to the Father

John 16:23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye

shall ask the Father in my name, he will give *it* you.

John 16:26 At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:

qarsew* as translation of *al tir)i* or *al tir)u

The usual LXX reflex of *al tir)i* is *mh fobou*, but 10x it is rendered *qarsew*, and *qarsew* is almost exclusively used as a translation of *al tir)i*. What special circumstances dictate this positive rendering of the command not to fear?

Note both together in Matt 14:27, “**Matthew 14:27** But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”

Instances of *qarsew*

Gen 35:17 Fear not; thou shalt have this son also.

Exod 14:13 Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD,

Exodus 20:20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

Joel 2:21 **Joel 2:21** Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things. **Joel 2:22** Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.

Zephaniah 3:16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: *and to Zion*, Let not thine hands be slack.

Hag 2:4,5 for I *am* with you, saith the LORD of hosts: **Haggai 2:5** *According to* the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.

Zechariah 8:13 And it shall come to pass, *that* as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, *but* let your hands be strong.

Zechariah 8:15 So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.

Instances of *m8 fobew*

Very many