

## Gospel and Union with Christ — 4 (Fruit, Friend & Enemy)

### Outline

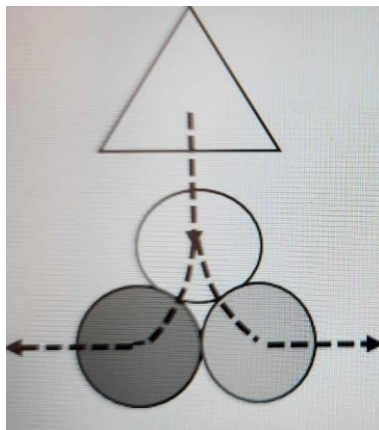
1. Fruit (John 15:1-12)
2. Friend (John 15:12-17)
3. Enemy (John 15:18-20)

### 1. Fruit

We have examined fruit-bearing in Gospel & Union with Christ (Parts 1-3). Here we will see some more aspects.

*John 15:9-12 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.*

We have seen in Part 2 that we abide in Christ (the true vine) by abiding in God’s word and abiding in God’s love. It is after the pattern of Jesus, who abides in the Father’s word and the Father’s love (John 15:10). By such abiding, we are in Union with Christ as a branch is in union with the vine. Then the Divine life flows in and through us, just like the vine’s sap flows in and through the branch. All we do is submit to the Father’s pruning so that the Divine life flows properly through us without diversion caused by our own desires. Then His love (John 15:12) and **His joy** (John 15:11), and **His peace** (John 14:27) flow through us, making our love, our joy and our peace complete.



In the diagram, the triangle represents GOD. The white circle represents the human spirit.

The dark grey circle represents the human body. The light grey circle represents the human soul.

The dotted line represents the flow of Divine life in and through a believer who abides in Christ—which enables us to bear the fruit of Divine love, Divine joy and Divine peace because Jesus abides in us as we abide in Him (John 15:4).

(Note: Human beings have body, soul and spirit — 1 Thess 5:23).

## Fruit of Prayer

*John 15:7-8 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.<sup>8</sup> This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

The mutual indwelling (John 15:4 *Remain in me, and I will remain in you*) is not meant to be “mystical”. It is our responsibility to remain or abide in Jesus by **obeying God's word** after the pattern of Jesus with the Father (John 15:10 *If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love*). Jesus is the word of God made flesh. We cannot say Jesus is Lord and not obey His word. We can't have one without the other. So, obedience to God's word is a visible sign of the invisible spiritual vitality of our union with Christ. Such obedient believers are **genuine disciples**. Their prayers are effective since all they ask for is according to God's will (1 John 5:14- 15). Such a fruitful prayer life brings glory to the Father because genuine disciples would pray with genuine faith that God's will be done and His kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven. In other words, the fruit of prayer from genuine disciples in union with Christ is at the heart of how Jesus brings glory to the Father.

## Fruit of evangelism and making disciples

*John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and **appointed** you so that you might **go** and bear fruit—**fruit that will last**—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.*

We did not choose Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, nor, to begin with, could we ever have chosen Him because we were sinners; we were His enemies (Rom 5:8, 10). In John 15:16, we see that Jesus chose us before we could. He chose us, and He **appointed** us. When **appointed** is used with the word “**go**”, it gives us a sense of mission. This sense is further strengthened when we notice the Greek word (etheka) for *appointed* is elsewhere used in the NT to be set apart for ministry (1 Tim 1:12, Acts 13:47).

Therefore, the words “**go and bear fruit**” refer to evangelism. And **go and fruit that will last** would mean **go and make disciples** who would continue believing in Jesus' teaching (John 8:31 *To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples*). In Matt 28:19, we see “**go and make disciples**” as Jesus' Great Commission given to all believers. Once again, He promises to answer our prayers for a successful evangelism ministry and make disciples of all nations because it is God's will (John 15:16).

With all these aspects of fruit in mind, our Union with Christ is never meant to be exclusively an inward fruit of faithful worship without an outward fruit of faithful missional discipleship.

## 2. Friend

*John 15:12-15 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.<sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.<sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command.<sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*

Jesus says, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you” (15:10). Such love between Father and Son is infinite Divine love. Then, in 15:12, Jesus says, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” Such endless love is not within us. We can only obey His command by allowing His Divine love to flow through us as we abide in Him.

Whereas Jesus loves the whole world and lays down His life for all humanity (John 3:16), only those who believe in His gospel appropriate His Divine love and are born again. To those who believe in His gospel, Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters (Heb 2:11). Elsewhere, He calls them His sheep who hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:15). Here, He calls them His friends (15:13- 15). And His friends must relate with each other with His Divine love and not as how the world relates. This is what I believe is

meant by recognising (discerning) the Body of Christ when we receive Holy Communion in a local church (1 Cor 11:29). We should not look and relate with each other by worldly distinctions of rich and poor, high caste or low caste, well dressed or not, educated and uneducated. But we should look at each other the way Christ looks at us—His family, His sheep, His friends—His Bride (Rev 21:9, Eph 5:25-32) and relate accordingly.

Jesus says, *“You are my friends if you do what I command”* (15:13) and, *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you”* (15:12). But obeying His command is not what makes them His friends because only believing in Him does. But this obedience is the character of His friend—to love what Jesus loves and hate what Jesus hates. Otherwise, you can’t walk closely with Him (*Amos 3:3 Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?*).

But if obedience is the character of His friend, what then is the difference between a servant and a friend—for both must obey. The big difference is “revelation”. Masters don’t reveal their plans to servants and yet demand obedience. But God reveals His plans and His heart to His friends. Abraham (2 Chron 20:7; Isa 41:8; James 2:23) and Moses (Exodus 33:11) are the only people in the OT whom God called His friends. And both enjoyed extraordinary revelations of God’s plans. In the NT, Jesus says, I no longer call you servants, but I call you friends, and I will reveal to you everything of the Father’s plans (John 15:15). Jesus continues to show believers His plans and desires through the scriptures and the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13).

God called Abraham and Moses His friends, but the Bible never called God their friend. In the NT, Jesus refers to Lazarus as His friend (John 11:11), but Jesus is not called the friend of Lazarus. The Bible never refers to God (or Jesus) as a friend of anyone. While Jesus may call me His friend, I can never say Jesus is my friend and will do whatever I ask of Him. Why not? Because He is Lord. Psalm 45:11, referring to the Bride of Christ, says, *“The King is enthralled by your beauty; honour Him for He is your lord”*. Jesus calls us His friends and reveals His plans so we can partner with Him in prayer to bring His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Our prayers are unanswered if we don’t pray according to His will. But this does not mean that Jesus is cold towards us. He loves us so much that He died for us on the cross. Jesus always obeyed His Father and did everything according to His Father’s plans, and He expects us to do the same. And when we do, He will answer our prayers.

### **3. Enemy (John 15:18-20)**

*John 15:18-20 “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. <sup>19</sup> If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also”.*

True disciples will engage in evangelism and making disciples. The world will hate them as their enemy because the world hated Jesus. So, Jesus clarifies to everyone the price to follow Him (Luke 14:25-33). It may even cost them their life. Then, those only with enthusiasm but no faith will drop off, and those with genuine faith in Him will continue to the end (Luke 9:57-62).