

The Gospel of John

Abiding in Christ

John 15:4-11

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus began chapter 15 by identifying Himself as the true vine and His Father as the vinedresser.

Then we were told of two kinds of branches. One type of branch bears fruit, the second type does not. I believe there is a contrast in our Lord's mind between Judas and the eleven. The two kinds of branches are true believers and Judas branches. Those who outwardly and visibly for a time attach themselves to Jesus, but there is no fruit there, and soon they are cut off. A branch cut off from a tree has no life. It cannot bear fruit.

John 15:6 (NASB)

⁶If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

There have been and still are a lot of Judas's in our world. People outwardly attach to Jesus Christ, but have no spiritual life. And they have all different reasons for doing it:

- Maybe they like the moral fellowship of the people around them.
- Maybe they want to fool themselves into thinking they are religious.
- Maybe they want to pacify a wife or a husband.
- Maybe they want to portray a false image of themselves in order to cover up their own guilt by a certain behavior that appears to them to be religious;
- Maybe they want God's salvation on their terms and think that if they behave themselves in a religious fashion that God would never punish them.

For whatever their reason, there are plenty and plenty of Judas branches.

There are two kinds of branches then, branches that do not bear fruit. They are taken away; they are burned; and they refer to these kind of people who, like Judas, stand in some kind of close connection to Jesus, but they apostate – they bail out. They are the **professors**. They claim to true disciples but do not bear fruit. Then there are the **possessors**. They are the branches who, like the other eleven, truly abide and truly bear fruit.

Will every Christian have fruit? Yes. Good fruit? Yes. You can tell a true believer because he will have good fruit.

Matthew 7:16-20 (NASB)

¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ So then, you will know them by their fruits.

You can tell the difference between a good tree and a bad tree based upon their fruits. There is no such thing as a true believer with no fruit.

Stand and Read Scripture

John 15:4-11 (NASB)

⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. ⁹ Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.

Prayer

BODY:

I. THE CONCEPT OF ABIDING.

The word abide is used seven times in our passage of scripture, so it must be very important. Let's look at the concept of abiding.

What is really involved in abiding?

The Bible uses all kinds of analogies to speak of our relationships to Christ.

For example, the Bible uses the concept of a kingdom. Where there is a kingdom there must be a king. We are the subjects of a kingdom and Christ is the King. He is responsible for taking care of His subjects and He does that by separating us from the world. But I don't get any real close feeling when I think of a king and his subjects.

It gets a little bit more intimate when the church is called a family, the household of God. God is the Father and we are His children. That is kind of intimate, but it is still not totally intimate. The family could be made up of individuals that are different from each other and struggle with family bonding. There is no real life connection other than you are your father's son.

But when you start getting into the concept of a vine, you start talking about intimacy, because you have got branches plugged into something else. Our existence depends upon the vine. I am not just a subject in a kingdom and I'm just not an individual in a family, I am a branch connected to a vine that provides my life support.

The intimacy even goes deeper when you get into the concept of the church as the body of Christ. You have Christ as the head and I am one of the members. His life is flowing through me too.

Do you realize, as a Christian you are a branch plugged into the vine and the very life of Christ is your life. When there is fruit hanging out on the end of you, it is because the very life of Christ and the power of Christ has been surging through you!

You are plugged into Him and the very flow of His energy comes through you and He actually bears fruit in your life. You grow together with Him. You get all your strength from Him. You're filled with His life, His energy; He produces fruit through you. What a fabulous concept. Now this is the analogy our Lord chooses. He says, I want you to be real branches. I want you to be branches through whom I can bear fruit. I don't want you to be fruitless ones where there is no commitment and there is no life. I don't want you to be superficially connected.

1 John 2:19 (NASB)

19 They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

Be real. That's the basic meaning of abiding – genuineness. The false always leave sooner or later.

Let me show you some other ways that He used this.

John 15:8 (NASB)

8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

Anyone who was responsible for tending a vine would be honored when he had a good fruit-bearing vine.

Jesus also promised that those who abide in Him will experience His love.

John 15:9 (NASB)

9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

And once again He tells us that if we love Him we will keep His commandments.

John 15:10 (NASB)

10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

If you want to see how dependant a branch is, just cut one off from a tree and see what it will do. It will just dry up and rot away. If you want a synonym for abiding in Christ, just put it this way, being obedient to His will. That is the same as abiding.

II. THE BLESSINGS OF ABIDING.

We have talked about the concept of abiding. It refers to being saved and being a true disciple that produces fruit. Now let's look at the blessings that we receive when we abide in Christ.

A. Producing Fruit.

John 15:5 (NASB)

⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Although we cannot be saved by our good works, when we are saved, we will produce good works through the lifeblood of Christ. Just as a baby will grow after birth, so a believer will grow after the new birth. We grow at different rates and in different ways, but a live birth results in growth. If a baby never grows, there is something very wrong. No one expects a baby to stay a baby forever. As he grows, the child begins to look more and more like his parents. In the same way, after salvation, we grow, and we begin to look more and more like our Heavenly Father. This is only possible as we “abide in Him” and allow Him to reproduce His character in us. Wouldn't it be terrible to live your whole life and have no fruit? I wonder how people must feel at the end of their life when they die having made no eternal contribution to anything.

B. Answered Prayer.

John 15:7 (NASB)

⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

God has promised that, when we ask for things that are in accordance with His will for our lives, He will give us what we ask for. However, there is one caveat to add to this: we may not always like the answer.

We pray for a lot of things—some good, some bad, some really pointless. But God listens to all of our prayers, regardless of what we ask. When we talk to Him, He has promised to listen and respond. His answer may be some variation of “yes” or “no” or “wait, not now.”

Keep in mind that prayer is not our way of getting God to do what we want. Our prayers should be focused on things that honor and glorify God and reflect what the Bible clearly reveals God's will to be. If we pray for something that dishonors God or is not His will for us, He is unlikely to give what we ask for. God's wisdom far exceeds our own, and we must trust that His answers to our prayers are the best possible solutions.

C. Joy in Our Lives.

John 15:11 (NASB)

¹¹ These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.

The world cannot understand the joy of the Lord. But, for the believer in Christ, the joy of the Lord comes as naturally as grapes on a vine. As we abide in Christ, the True Vine, we, the branches, are full of His strength and vitality, and the fruit we produce, including joy, is His doing.

Faith is the victory that overcomes the world, and the joy of the Lord is our strength. Adverse circumstances, instead of hindering our faith, can actually enhance our joy. Paul and Silas knew adversity as they sat with their feet in the stocks in a Philippian jail cell. They had been arrested without cause and beaten without a trial. At midnight, since they couldn't sleep, they sang—loudly—the praises of the Lord.

III. WHAT ARE THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT?

John 15:5 (NASB)

⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; **he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit**, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

So if **true** disciples are branches that produce fruit, it would be important to understand what Jesus meant by fruit in my life. There are two kinds of fruit. Attitude fruit and action fruit.

A. Action Fruit.

Action fruit is the result of our love for God and others.

Speaking in a parable concerning the judgment to come Jesus talked about action fruits.

Matthew 25:34-40 (NASB)

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink? ³⁸ And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹ When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them*, you did it to Me.’

Action fruit seeks to give glory to God in everything that we do and say. So action fruit could be any good thing you did: winning someone to Christ, giving money to a needy person, praising God, doing any good works. That's action fruit. It is a real blessing that my life can be fruitful simply by doing something good for somebody else, that I can produce something that is wonderful and blessed of God.

B. Attitude Fruit.

There is also attitude fruit. Our attitude fruit is recorded in Galatians 5.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

These fruits are not acts, they are attitudes, aren't they.

The formula that God wants from us to abide in Christ and He in you. That produces attitude fruit and that produces action fruit. If you have action fruit without attitude fruit, that is legalism. You are out there cranking up the good works with the wrong attitudes just as the Jews did in Jesus' day. God rejects that. But if you abide in Christ and He abides in you the Spirit of God produces right **attitude** fruit within you, that right attitude fruit will produce right **action** fruit.

I want to abide and produce fruit. Don't you? I want to be a true disciple.

CONCLUSION:

No one can be considered a branch in the Lord's Vine unless there is a vital connection to Him. No one can bear fruit for the glory of the Lord unless they are attached to the Vine and receiving his life-giving nourishment. This is an absolute necessity for life and fruit bearing.

How does one get to be "*in*" Jesus? The only way this can happen is for the "new birth" to take place. We must be born again and we must continue to abide in Him.

So how to Abide in Christ?

Pray regularly. Spend time with God in prayer, both telling him your concerns, dreams, hopes, and fears. The scriptures tell us that we are to pray without ceasing. This does not mean that we are to be physically on our knees all day before God. God can hear our thoughts as well as our verbal requests. Prayer also requires that you stay quiet and listen for God's voice.

Read and meditate on God's word. Try to read the Bible every day. Ask God to teach you, challenge you, and change you based on his word. It is the only way that we can "**present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.**"

Glorify God in everything you do and say. Find opportunities to praise and glorify God through your actions, even the small things you do.

Participate in church. Many people attend church, fewer intentionally participate. As we worship and serve alongside other believers, we'll be growing in Christ and thus abiding in him.

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He is Lord.