

## PARABLES OF JESUS

### THE VINE, JOHN 15:1-11

- A. The work of Jesus and the Father in the lives of believers (1-3)
1. Jesus declares that He is the vine and His Father is the vinedresser (1), *I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.*
    - a. Israel was God's chosen vine on which He expected fruit.
      - 1) Jeremiah 2:21, *Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine?*
      - 2) Hosea 10:1-2, *Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built; as his country improved, he improved his pillars. Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt. The LORD will break down their altars and destroy their pillars.*
    - b. Jesus is the *True Vine* who fulfills what God intended for the nation of Israel, Psalm 80:14-17, *Turn again, O God of hosts! Look down from heaven, and see; have regard for this vine, the stock that your right hand planted, and for the son whom you made strong for yourself. They have burned it with fire; they have cut it down; may they perish at the rebuke of your face! But let your hand be on the man of your right hand, the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself!*
    - c. God the Father is the vinedresser who protects and nourished the Vine, Tom Constable, *No vine will produce good fruit unless someone competent cares for it.*
  2. The Father as the Vinedresser (2), *Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*
    - a. *in me*
      - 1) This phrase is used 16 times in the Gospel of John and always means to be in fellowship with Christ.
      - 2) Branches of a vine share the life of the vine.
      - 3) Joseph Dillow, *It is inconsistent then to say the phrase in 15:2 refers to a person who merely professes to be saved but is not. A person 'in Me' is always a true Christian.*
    - b. The Father removes branches that do not bear fruit (2a)
      - 1) The issue for grapevines is cultivation not destruction.
      - 2) Not all branches bear fruit.
      - 3) Thomas Constable, *There can be genuine life without fruit in a vine, and there can be in a Christian as well.*
    - c. The Father prunes branches that bear fruit so they will be more productive (2b)
      - 1) The intent of the vinedresser is not to kill the plant but to prune branches that are not bearing fruit so fruit bearing branches will thrive.
      - 2) This comparison to a Christian means that each branch is not an individual Christian but the Christian is a plant that needs pruning to become all God wants one to be.
    - d. *takes away*
      - 1) It can mean to *take away*, understood by some to be judgment, loss of salvation, loss of reward or even one's life.
      - 2) Also, it can mean *to lift up*, understood to be special attention by the vinedresser so they will bear fruit in the future.
      - 3) I believe *lift up* is the proper interpretation.
        - a) The Father gives special support to believers who are not yet bearing fruit.
        - b) It could require disciplining a believer in areas of weakness.
        - c) James 1:2-4, *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

3. Jesus as the Vine (3), *Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.*
    - a. He makes the branches clean by His word, a response of faith to God's grace in Christ.
    - b. The pruning process takes place after salvation.
    - c. Thomas Constable, *Divine care and discipline follow the granting of eternal life. Jesus did not want the Eleven to conclude, as many people do, that the absence of fruit or the presence of difficulties indicates the absence of salvation.*
- B. Results concerning abiding in Christ (4-8)
1. Those who abide in Christ will bear much fruit (4-5)
    - a. We can abide in Christ because He abides in us (4a), *Abide in me, and I in you.*
      - 1) He will never leave us nor forsake us.
      - 2) The issue is our abiding in Him.
    - b. We must abide in Christ even as a branch must abide in the vine to bear fruit (4b), *As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.*
      - 1) Our abiding in Him can't be taken for granted but develops because of our deepening love and obedience to Him.
      - 2) John 14:23-24, *Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*
      - 3) Thomas Constable, *The branches then should make a deliberate effort (indicated by the imperative verb "abide") to maintain a close personal relationship to the true vine. We should do this not because failure to do so will result in our losing the life of God that we possess...We should do it because the extent of our fruitfulness as believers is in direct proportion to our intimacy with Jesus. Divine life depends on connection with the true vine by exercising saving faith in Him, but fruitfulness depends on abiding in the vine by exercising loving obedience toward Him.*
    - c. We must never forget that Jesus is the vine and we are the branches (5), *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*
      - 1) Those who abide in Christ will bear much fruit.
        - a) Abiding means to develop an intimate relationship with Jesus.
        - b) That occurs through a deepening love and obedience to Jesus.
      - 2) Those who do not abide in Christ can do nothing.
        - a) Not abiding does not mean unsaved, but not developing an intimate relationship with Jesus.
        - b) Zane Hodges, *How strange that in our day and time we have been told so often that fruitlessness is a sure sign that a person is unsaved. Certainly we did not get this idea from the Bible. Rather, the Bible teaches that unfruitfulness in a believer is a sure sign that one is no longer moving forward, no longer growing in Christ. It is a sign that the Christian is spiritually sick, and until well again, cannot enjoy spiritual success.*
  2. A warning for those not abiding in Christ (6), *If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.*
    - a. Those not abiding in Christ become useless.
    - b. One is gathered like branches and thrown into the fire and burned.
      - 1) Some believe it refers to believers losing their salvation which contradicts clear biblical teaching.
        - a) John 5:24, *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*
        - b) John 10:28-29, *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*
        - c) Romans 8:1, *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*
      - 2) Others believe it refers to a Christian's loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ, 1 Corinthians 3:15, *If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.*

- 3) I believe the point is that non-abiding Christians are as useless to God as those branches are to vinegrowers.
    - a) The issue is uselessness not judgment.
    - b) This passage encourages us to abide in Christ so we can be productive not to encourages us to avoid judgment.
3. Another result of abiding in Christ is answered prayer (7-8)
- a. You may ask for whatever you wish and it will be done for you (7), ***If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you***
    - 1) This is a promise for those abiding in Christ; those who have a deepening love for Christ and obedience to His will.
    - 2) 1 John 5:14-15, *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*
    - 3) Thomas Constable, *This verse has also been a stumbling-block to some sincere Christians. It appears to be a blanket promise to grant any request the disciple may offer. Really it is a blanket promise to grant any request that an abiding disciple may offer. An abiding disciple will ask only those things that are in harmony with or subject to God's will, as Jesus did. The wishes of abiding disciples are the same as Jesus' wishes. To ask anything else would make the praying believer a non-abiding disciple.*
  - b. God is glorified by answering your prayers for bearing fruit (8), ***By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.***
    - 1) Abiding in Christ glorifies the Father and is evidenced by a fruitful life.
    - 2) Jesus glorified the Father by doing what He was called to do, John 17:4, *I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.*
    - 3) We glorify the Father by abiding in Christ, being conformed to His image, Romans 8:29, *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...*
  - c. Bearing much fruit proves that you are Jesus' disciple.
    - 1) A fruitful life is evidence that one is abiding in Christ.
    - 2) Christians can't manufacture spiritual fruit because it comes from abiding in Christ.
    - 3) Luke 6:43, *For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit*
- C. Conditions for abiding in Christ (9-10)
1. The love of Christ (9), ***As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.***
    - a. Jesus loves us the same as the Father loves Him
      - 1) Jesus' love for us is patterned after the Father's love for Jesus.
      - 2) Our love for Jesus is to be patterned after the Son's love for the Father.
    - b. Abide in Jesus' love
      - 1) We are to rest in His loving care for us.
      - 2) We are not to trust in our love for Him which develops from His love for us.
  2. Keep Jesus' commandments (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.***
    - a. Abiding in Jesus' love demands obedience.
      - 1) The pattern of our love for Jesus is obedience
      - 2) 1 John 5:3, *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.*
    - b. We are to imitate Jesus' obedience to the Father.
      - 1) The pattern of Jesus' love for the Father was obedience.
      - 2) John 6:38, *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.*

- c. Disobedience is possible.
  - 1) It is a daily choice to obey, Romans 12:1, *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*
  - 2) Thomas Constable, *God does not stop loving His disobedient children. It is rather that we can withdraw from the enjoyment and blessings of His love.*
  
- D. Reasons why Jesus spoke on abiding (11), *These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*
  - 1. Jesus wants His joy to be in us.
    - a. Jesus experienced joy by living a fruitful life, Hebrews 12:2, *looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*
    - b. Jesus' purpose was to give us not only eternal life but joy.
      - 1) John 17:13, *But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.*
      - 2) Thomas Constable, *Loving obedience is the cause of the disciple's fruitfulness, but joy is its result.*
  
  - 2. He wants our joy to be full.
    - a. Abiding in Christ produces fulness of joy because we are becoming all God created us to be.
    - b. John 10:10, *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*
    - c. Happiness is based on circumstances but joy is based on fellowship, abiding in Christ.

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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Warren Wiersbe, "How can we tell when we are 'abiding in Christ'? Is there a special feeling? No, but there are special evidences that appear and they are unmistakably clear. For one thing, when you are abiding in Christ, you produce fruit (John 15:2). . . . Also, you experience the Father's 'pruning' so that you will bear more fruit (John 15:2). The believer who is abiding in Christ has his prayers answered (John 15:7) and experiences a deepening love for Christ and for other believers (John 15:9, 12-13). He also experiences joy (John 15:11).