



“Open Church – Open Bible

Min. Marossa Davis



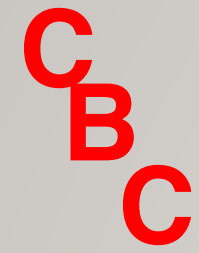
Sunday Church School

JANUARY 9, 2022

“ Abide in the True Vine ”

John 15: 1-8

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“ Abide in the True Vine”
John 15:1-8 (KJV)

- v. 1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.**
- v. 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.
- v. 3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.**
- v. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

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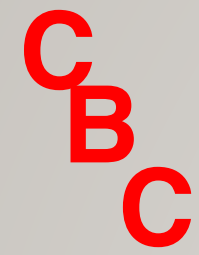
“ Abide in the True Vine”
John 15:1-8 (KJV)

v. 5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

v. 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

v. 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.

v. 8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”



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In last week’s lesson , we learned that Jesus is the only way to God. There are no other choices for those who want to have eternal life. Jesus did not come to show us a way; He is **the Way**. He did not come to simply give us a plan of truth to live by; He is **the Truth**. He did not give us a step by step plan to have a better life; He is **the Life**. No one else can take us to God.

This week, we will see the importance of staying connected to Jesus at all times. Just as He is the only way to God, He is the only way to a fruitful life for God. It is vital that we stay connected to Him. Anything apart from Him will certainly result in death and separation.

Jesus had been preparing His disciples for His suffering and death, which would come the very next day. He tells them , however, that



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without Him, they can do nothing. How could a man who is going to die the next day ensure success for them? He could do this because He would rise from the dead three days later. Even death cannot separate us from Him (cf. Rom. 8:38-39), and **life is only found in Christ.**

We are currently in the middle of winter and while some love cold weather, many more long for Spring. Those who plant flowers and vegetable gardens begin to think about the new life that will emerge within the next few months.

Whether you are a farmer, gardener, or an interested onlooker, we all understand the necessity of plowing, planting and harvesting. In Jesus’ parables, these concepts are often used to teach important spiritual lessons.



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TODAY’S AIM

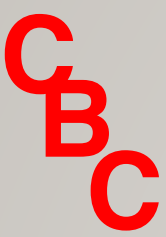
FACTS: to learn how Jesus claims to be the True Vine

PRINCIPLE: to know with certainty that without the Lord Jesus Christ, we can do nothing.

APPLICATION: to stay connected to Jesus through faith, love and obedience.

LESSON OUTLINE

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| I. THE VINEDRESSER | JOHN 15: 1-3 |
| II. ABIDING IN THE VINE | JOHN 15: 4-5 |
| III. HUMILITY IN ACTION | JOHN 15: 6-8 |



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I. THE VINEDRESSER

JOHN 15:1-3

Over the last few lessons, Jesus had been relating His final instructions to the apostles in the Upper Room prior to His arrest. The news that He was about to leave them brought sadness to their hearts. Moreover, the fact that the “ prince of this world” , the devil, was on the move must have sounded an ominous note in the disciples ears (14:30).

That Jesus begins this section with “I Am” is noteworthy. This is the 8th and final time in John’s Gospel that Jesus has used this expression to identify Himself. Previously, He had said, “I am the bread of life,” “ I am the light of the world,” “Before Abraham was, I am,” “I am the door of the sheep,” “ I am the good shepherd,” “I am the resurrection and the life,” and “ I am the way, the truth and the life” (6:35; 8:12, 58; 10:7,11 ; 11:25;14:6).

By using these various “I am” statements, Christ was actually



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identifying Himself as Yahweh, the Lord- the very God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 3:6). “ Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel , **I AM** hath sent me unto you” (vs. 14). When , in John 8: 58, Jesus declares to the Jewish religious leaders, “ Before Abraham was, I am, ” they picked up rocks to stone Him for blasphemy because they understand that Jesus is claiming that He is equal to God.

When Jesus speaks metaphorically of Himself as “ the true vine”, He is identifying Himself as the true Israel personified. One of the most famous Old Testament parables using the vine imagery is found in Isaiah 5:1-7. There, Israel is called “ the vineyard of the Lord of hosts” (v. 7). The Lord expended great effort and care upon His vineyard, but instead of a good crop, He got only wild , sour grapes. Where He looked for **justice**, He found only oppression; where He looked for **righteousness**, He heard only the outcry of the exploited.

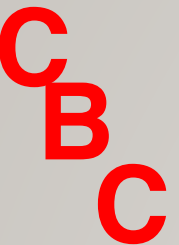
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The vine metaphor is also used in a similar way in Psalms 80:8-19.

Interestingly, during the Maccabean period, two hundred years before this discourse in John 15, Jewish coinage itself depicted Israel as such a vine. “ Assuming that the Lord’s Supper had just been instituted by Jesus the metaphor of the vine is naturally suggested by ‘the fruit of the vine’ (Mark 14:25 ; Matt. 26:29)” (Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Broadman).

In John 15, Christ is “presented as the true Israel, the genuine vine, the man of God’s right hand” (Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, Eerdsmans). The Heavenly Father is identified with the “ husbandman,” the Vinedresser who cares for the vineyard. Unlike most seasonal crops that sprout quickly after planting, vineyards require many seasons to develop. God had taken centuries to prepare the nation of Israel for Messiah’s coming, but alas, “ He came unto



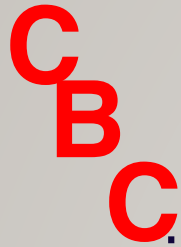
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his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11).

As those who work with trees and vines know, if a branch bears no fruit, it needs to be removed, since it uses resources that would otherwise be devoted to fruit- bearing branches. If a branch is bearing fruit, then pruning- thinning some of it away - is necessary. This maximizes the productivity of the vine by channeling its resources toward producing increased fruit rather than majoring on leaves.

When we come to Christ, we do so as spiritual babes (cf.1 Cor. 3:1-3) Some converts mature spiritually sooner than others. Sadly, some seem to remain stuck, hardly moving beyond a basic knowledge and application of the Christian faith (cf. Heb. 5:12- 6:3). For those who do mature, however, it is important to continue maturing. We should never be content to remain where we are. Continual progress invariably includes “ pruning “ in the form of trials,



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sacrifices and tribulations.

While such experiences challenge our faith, they also deepen it.

Warren Wiersbe writes “ Your Heavenly Father is never nearer to you than when He is pruning you....Pruning does not simply mean spiritual surgery that removes what is bad. It can also mean cutting away the good and the better so that we might enjoy the best. Yes, pruning hurts, but it also helps. We may not enjoy it, but we need it (*BE Transformed* , Cook).

The eleven remaining disciples in the Upper Room were clean (John 15.3) by the word of Christ. They had listened to Him, believed Him and obeyed His teachings. But Judas Iscariot, now absent , was unclean (cf.13:10 -11), meaning that he was a false disciple.

There are those who profess faith in Christ who do not **possess** genuine faith in Him. Faith indeed comes through hearing the Word of God (cf. Rom 10:17), but genuine faith will always be manifested through good works.

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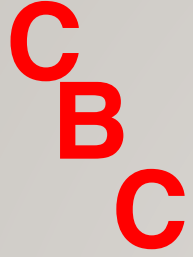
(c.f. Jas.2:14-26). Maturing in our faith is vital to both spiritual growth and our personal assurance of salvation (cf. II Peter 1:5-11). “ The only way to continue ‘clean’ (pruned) and to bear fruit is to maintain vital spiritual (connection) with Christ (the vine)” (Robertson.

II. ABIDING IN THE VINE

JOHN 15: 4-5

The word translated “ abide” appears over one hundred times in the New Testament, mostly in the Gospel of John and in I John. It is sometimes used in a physical sense of remaining or staying in a certain place (cf. John 1:38). But it is also used in a spiritual sense, as it is here in John 15.

There is, of course, a sense in which Christ is holding on to us, as when He said concerning His sheep, “ Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (10: 28) . But at the same time, we must hold on to Him, that is



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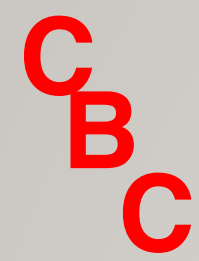
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abide in Him. He also abides, or remains in us.

In short, following Christ is a two way street. True, both our decision to come to Christ and our ability to remain in Him depend on divine initiative and power. But this does not nullify our responsibility to persevere in the faith. We are pressing on (cf. Heb 12:1). As great a man of God as he was, Paul refused to presume upon God’s saving grace (I Cor. 9:27).

A branch that is severed from its tree or vine is thereby cut off from the nutrients that produce fruit. To abide in Christ means to stay spiritually connected to Christ. Otherwise no fruit can be produced. “ The living sap from the stock flowing into it enables it to produce grapes; otherwise it is fruitless. So with Jesus’ disciples” (Bruce).

This should also remind us that any fruit we produce in the Christian life or in evangelism is not the result of our own power or ability. As Paul points out, the virtuous qualities that reflect Christian conversion are, in



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“ the fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22). Peter likewise teaches that Christian virtues keep us from being barren and unfruitful (cf. II Peter 1:8).

“ **This abiding relationship is natural to the branch and the vine**, but it must be cultivated in the Christian life. It is not automatic. Abiding in Christ demands worship, meditation on God’s Word, prayer, sacrifice and service- but what a joyful experience it is! Once you have begun to cultivate this deeper communion with Christ, you have no desire to return to the shallow life of the careless Christian” (Wiersbe).

Although Jesus was speaking to His chosen apostles when He said, “ Ye are the branches” (John 15: 5) , this applies to all followers of Christ , both ancient and modern.

Among other things, abiding in Christ makes it possible for the believer to bring forth “ much fruit ”. This includes those qualities that make up the fruit of the Spirit, but it also includes leading others to Christ. If the fruit of a grape vine is grapes, then the fruit of the Christian should be more Christians.

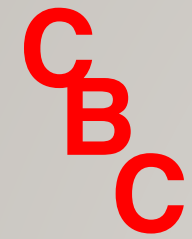
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Sadly, many believers never lead anyone to Christ. To be sure, there are those who are gifted in evangelism, but that does not mean that those who are not so gifted can ignore the unsaved.

At some level, all of us need to be seeking to reach the lost. If nothing else, we must make sure that our lives and lips match our profession of faith. “ The word ‘results’ is often heard in conversations among Christian workers, but this is not actually a Bible concept. A machine can produce results, and so can a robot, but it takes a living organism to produce fruit; a good crop does not come overnight “ (Wiersbe) .

When Jesus said , “ Without me ye can do nothing,” He was not talking about secular activities. Even people who do not believe in God can accomplish many things in the world. But from the standpoint of that which has eternal value and significance, only what we do for Christ truly matters, and for that we need Him. As missionary C.T. Studd famously said,



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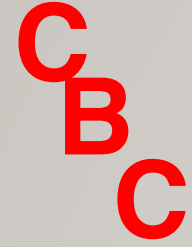
“ Only one life, ‘ twill soon be past; Only what’s done for Christ will last.”

III. A WARNING AND A PROMISE JOHN 15: 6-8

Just as a branch that does not remain connected to a rooted tree will wither and die, so it is with those who are alienated from Christ. Such branches are gathered and burned. While fire is sometimes used as a symbol for purification from sin (cf. Isa. 6:5-7), it is often used as a symbol of judgment and destruction (Ezekiel 15: 1-8 ; Matt. 13: 36-43)

If we take the Bible seriously, we must conclude that a fiery judgment awaits unbelievers (Rev. 20 12-15; 21:8). Many who **profess** faith are nevertheless among the lost. As Christ pointed out , even the ability to prophesy , exorcise demons or perform miracles is no guarantee that a person is a true believer (Matt. 7 21-23). Jesus was not speaking of people losing their salvation either, since He said to them, “ I never knew you”. The Lord chooses His words carefully and He means what He says.

The reality that we cannot be taken from the Lord’s hand (John 10:28),



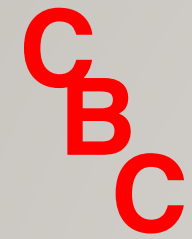
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that nothing can separate us from God’s love (Rom. 8: 38-39), and that God is able to keep us from falling (Jude 1:24), should not lead us to presumption concerning our salvation. There are many New Testament exhortations to faithfulness and obedience and not without cause. The prospects of spiritual ruin, a destroyed testimony, and uselessness for God’s kingdom work are real and catastrophic. We must not make light of such things.

Jesus promised that the prayers of those who remained steadfastly in Him would always be answered. Although God answers all prayers with either yes, no, or wait, keep in mind that this promise was originally spoken to Jesus’ apostles. How and when their prayers were answered may differ from how God answers ours. Other passages, however, assure us that God’s people can expect to be heard by our Heavenly Father.

We should not take this to mean that everything we pray for will be automatically granted. It is possible for even Christians to pray amiss and for the wrong things. Nevertheless, “ Receiving an answer to the prayer of faith is



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one form of spiritual fruit bearing” (Bruce).

As it was with Jesus, our words and works should be for the purpose of glorifying God. One way to bring glory to God is to “ bear much fruit” (v. 8). In this way we show that we are true disciples of Christ. A fruitless disciple is a contradiction. Our purpose in coming to Christ is not just to receive the salvation He offers, but to glorify Him by being fruit-bearing followers. In this regard, our actions speak louder than our words.

In conclusion, two types of branches are contrasted in verse 2, but notice that both kinds are in some sense related to Christ. The first type of branch is one that does not bear fruit, which Jesus says is “taken away.”

Some interpret the Greek verb *aireo* as “ to lift up”. In this view , the fruitless branch is a backslidden Christian whom God will lift up, so that by gaining access to the light, it can be fruitful. Others argue that *aireo* does mean “ to take away,” indicating that the branch was never truly connected to Christ by faith (cf. John 2:23; 6:64,66, 70; 8:30-31,37) and is eventually

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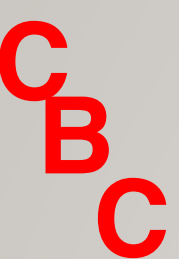
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“cast forth” (15:6). Those who hold this view argue further that such fruitlessness is possible only if one is not abiding in the vine (v. 5). To abide means to ‘stay put’ without struggle. We do not have to struggle in order to stay in Christ. We simply have to **trust Him**.

Abiding is more than just us being in Christ. It is also Christ being in us. Refusing to abide will cause a believer to wither and dry up. He or she is then gathered and burned by men . Those who believe unfruitful branches are merely lifted up argue that the burning by men puts a serious dent in the belief that Jesus is referring here to eternal judgment on other men. In this view, people will ridicule the one who claims to be a Christian, but is not bearing fruit. God lifts such unfruitful believers up and exposes them to the light while the world “burns” them with insults and ridicule, dismissing them as hypocrites.

Those who hold that the unfruitful branches are *removed* point out that the ridicule by the world seems more the result of faithfulness in the Christian life than unfaithfulness (cf. John 16: 1-3,33; II Tim. 3:12) and that

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coheres more with imagery of judgment than with the idea of being lifted up for exposure to light. It is also possible that the men mentioned here are hired hands of the Husbandman, who Himself is the Judge.

One thing is for sure, the only way for us to live productive lives is to stay connected to Christ. It is wrong to think that we can please the Lord while being separated from Him. The only way for a branch to bear fruit is to stay connected to the Vine. All life and nourishment come from the Vine, not the branches. Likewise, Christians are to stay connected to Jesus because **we can do nothing without Him.**

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Practical Points

1. True life is in Jesus, and it is given to us by the Father (John 15:1).
2. Those who belong to God have a responsibility to proclaim who He is (vs. 2-3).
3. We cannot bear fruit for God if we are living apart from Christ (vs. 4-5).
4. Every Christian should make a positive impact on the world for the gospel (v. 6).
5. Abiding in Christ is an important key to answered prayer (v. 7).
6. Our desire should be to accomplish as much for the Lord as possible (v. 8).

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“ Abide in the True Vine” Questions For Reflection

1. How can the knowledge that Jesus is the Vine give us confidence and security?
2. Abiding in Christ means to *remain* in Him. How do you abide in Christ?
3. Why are we unable to bear fruit if we do not abide in Christ?
4. What does it mean to “ bear much fruit “?

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