

Stay In Christ

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The spiritual world is hard for the mind of man to comprehend. From the beginning of humanity, people have delved into the spirit world and have always come up with the wrong answers when doing so without the guidance of God. This is why so many religious teachings are far from the truth of God. Peeping into the spirit world by unregenerate humans produces witchcraft, voodoo, occult religions, fear, and often violence. Jesus knew this about the human mind. That is why he often used metaphors and similes to explain to his disciples about principles that God invokes, and to explain His relationship to His people.

This portion of the word of God is just such an explanation. Christ uses something as simple as descriptions about vines, farmers, and fruit on the vine to explain His and the Heavenly Father's relationship to His people, and their relationship and dependence on Him.

I. **John 15:1** *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

- This statement of fact sets the stage for our examination of what He says that follows
- He is the true vine - when we start talking about grapes and follow those grapes back to their origin, we find some branches and leaves where those grapes began, and developed. Those grapes and the branches that bore them were connected to a vine that gave life, growth, and nourishment to those vines where grapes were birthed and nurtured by that same vine, through those branches. This is what our Lord describes here in order to show the essential connected-ness that has resulted from our being redeemed. It also shows the order and process by which God works through Christ, in us.
- Notice that God is the husbandman...the caretaker
 - Think also of the fact that when the caretaker of a vineyard does something to improve the production of a grapevine, he deals with the branches on it. This brings us to the second part of Christ's comparison:

II. **John 15:2** *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.*

- Two things are focused on in the Lord's explanation about production
 - First, every branch that doesn't produce grapes is taken away
 - It is interesting that the Greek word Christ chose here which is translated into English as "taketh away" has the connotation of taking away by lifting

or “to take up” - Isn’t this descriptive of the Lord removing an unfruitful branch by taking it up to heaven?

▶ To understand why it is reasonable for God to remove unfruitful branches, let’s examine the appointment God has made for believers: **Eph. 2:10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

• Since the sovereign God has created the branches in Christ “unto good works,” then if those branches do not produce good works, it is reasonable that the Maker take them away as useless.

- Second, every branch which DOES produce grapes is cleaned of deadwood, extra stems, and anything that detracts from production

III. **John 15:3** Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

- Reference this verse back to verse 3 phrase “he purgeth it” (i.e. he cleans it).
- How does God clean the branches of the vine?

IV. **John 15:4** 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.

- If we start from the premise that a branch, whether connected or disconnected from a grapevine is still a product or creation of that vine, we may be able to more accurately understand what Christ is telling us here:
- First, in order to debunk what some teach about this verse being a statement about being saved and getting lost, if keeping or not keeping salvation were dependent on the person who is supposedly saved, then this verse would be excellent for warning people about getting lost again. But since we are kept by the power of God, we need to understand this verse to mean something else. So what does it mean?
 - ▶ If we make our sphere of movement...that is thought, word and deed, to be in Christ...that is we perform the things of our lives within the framework of Christ’s principles, AND we maintain a state of acceptance and invitation for Christ to be in our space, and to manifest himself in us, then we bear fruit.

V. **John 15:5** 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.

- This verse seems to just repeat v. 4, but that is not the case
- Notice that Christ places emphasis on “abideth in me.” This phrase is stated in such a way that the grammar of it forces us to think in terms of, “The person

that stays centered on me and keeps on staying centered on Me day in and day out is the one who brings forth MUCH fruit.”

▶ I believe if we perform a self-check we will be able to notice something about our lives and our fruitfulness in Christ; that is, we should be able to see that when we are close to the Lord we seem to produce more spiritual things; conversely, when we are distant from Christ, when we are chasing after worldly things, we have little if any spiritual fruit. This is what the Lord is speaking about.

▶ The last phrase nails this down. When you are not living in contact with Him, you do nothing that is called spiritual...that which is spiritual is all that Christ sees as “something,” as opposed to “nothing” (without me ye can do nothing).

- Last on this verse: Because the Lord used a pronoun (ye) that included all of those disciples together we may assume that He was saying that this same principle applies to a congregation as well as to individuals.

VI. John 15:6 *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.*

- Here, the Lord turns specifically to the individual believer.
 - ▶ Failure to live that “connected” life with Christ is compared to a branch on a grapevine that is not growing right and that has no grapes on it...it is extended out of the vine like the other branches, but it is puny, stunted, leaves are wilted or dying, and it has no fruit on it.
 - ▶ Notice the further illustration: those who see such sorry branches gather them up and throw them into the fire and the fire burns them up.
 - ▶ I believe our Lord phrased this in such a way as to draw our attention first to the agents who were doing the gathering. Notice that He does not mention vine-dressers...just men.
 - If a believer wanders away from continuance with Christ; away from walking with Him and opening the heart’s door to His presence, that believer’s life will be bundled with branches of like kind by people of the world. When the people of the world class this kind of Christian in with all like him, they consider such lives and people who possess them as so much trash to be burned. Such a life, supposedly a Christian life, and a Christian person, is worthless to them. That is the casting into the fire. I believe the emphasis here should be on the worthlessness of those things that humans

throw into a trash fire.

▶ Notice that Jesus does not say the men burn them, only that they are cast into the fire by them. “They are burned” is our Lord’s statement about the withered branches. There is no agent except the fire. What does this teach us?

- Every work of a Christian who refuses to walk with the Lord...to abide in Him...their very lives are turned into ashes.
- There is no more waste in the world than the life a believer who wants to be so worldly that they find no place to connect with Christ.

VII. 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.*

- The first thing I see the Lord emphasizing (again) here is that abiding in Him and Him abiding in us are two different sides of a coin, and are different in that abiding in Him deals with spiritual fellowship, while His words (or as He said in v. 5, “and I in him”) abiding in us is referring to the principles which guide our thinking and behavior. Neither can exist without the other, yet they are two aspects of a whole by which we have connected-ness with the Lord.
- The spiritual world is hard for the mind of man to comprehend. From the beginning of humanity, people have delved into the spirit world and have always come up with the wrong answers when doing so without the guidance of God.
 - ▶ Illustrate: I am in a car. I am driving the car. I know all the basics and some advanced stuff about operating a car. Now, let’s take away the car. I have the basic and advanced knowledge about how to drive a car, but I don’t have the car there to drive. This is having head knowledge about the words of Christ, but not having the presence of Christ to give meaning to the head knowledge.
 - A lot of religion we see nowadays is well illustrated as being like a person who knows all about driving a car, but doesn’t have a car to drive.
 - True believers who have learned a lot about Christ, but then wander off into a place where they are not operating inside the sphere of Christ’s guidance and control are like that, also.
- ▶ Now, let’s take away the knowledge. Here I sit in the car. I have the physical presence of the car, the potential that the car possesses to take me somewhere, but I don’t have any knowledge about how to drive the car. The car will not transport me. It will not take me anywhere. It has the capacity to take me where I want to go, but I cannot conceive of how to cause it to do so. This is an

illustration of abiding in Christ, but not having Him and/or His word abiding in us.

VIII. John 15:8 *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

- The “abiding in Him, and Him abiding in us” results in something that glorifies God - namely, that we bear much fruit,
 - ▶ This fruit-bearing opens up a new dimension in our relationship with Christ also - when we bear much fruit we become true learners and followers (disciples).
 - ▶ Note here that discipleship is not defined as making a profession of faith; rather, as bearing fruit
 - ▶ Can’t finalize this point without looking at the list of fruit: **Gal. 5:22-23** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

IX. Conclusion: Long range reason for abiding in him

- **1John 2:28** And now, little children, **abide in him; that**, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.
 - ▶ John does a great job here of clarifying once and for all that Jesus’ discourse in our text was not about saved people vs. lost people, but about saved people who study and strive to abide in Christ vs. saved people who don’t. Why do I say this? Because his address is to “little children.” This is not about kids, by the way, but rather about converts that old John sees as little children in the Lord. Nothing here suggests an address to unsaved people.