

Abiding in the Vine

John 15:1-8
8-10-2025

Introduction: v.1

*** Brethren, let us draw close to our Lord Jesus (in daily fellowship) and remain there, so that our lives may be Fruitful!**

The Blessings of Staying Close to the Lord Jesus Christ

I. ***Remaining Close to Jesus*** **<u>makes Fruit-Bearing</u> <u>POSSIBLE</u> (v.4-5)**

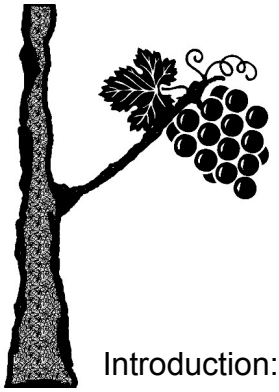
II. ***Remaining Close to Jesus*** **<u>makes Fruit-Bearing</u> <u>INCREASE</u> (v.2-3)**

III. ***Remaining Close to Jesus*** **<u>Avoids the Risk of Being Rendered USELESS</u> (v.6)**

IV. ***Remaining Close to Jesus*** **is <u>the Secret to Receiving ANSWERS TO PRAYER</u> (v.7)**

V. ***Remaining Close to Jesus*** **<u>Results in God being GLORIFIED by your Fruitfulness</u> (v.8a)**

VI. ***Remaining Close to Jesus*** **<u>Makes You a Real DISCIPLE</u> (v.8b)**



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Two key words in John 15 –

"Fruit" – 8 times (v. 2, 4. 5, 8, 16)
"Abide" – 11 times (v. 4, 5, 6, 7, 10)
(it is translated "continue" in Jn. 15:9 and "remain" in 15:11)

"I am" - Here again we have one of the great "I am" statements in John's Gospel.

I am the living water (Jn. 4)
I am the bread of life (Jn. 6:35)
I am the light of the world (Jn. 8:12; o:5)
I am the door (Jn. 10:7, 9)
I am the good shepherd (Jn. 10:11)
I am the resurrection and the life (Jn. 11:25)
I am the way, the truth, the life (Jn. 14:6)

The metaphor of the "vine" was a well-understood image to those living in Palestine in Bible days. The Old Testament has quite a bit to say about vineyards (cp. Gen. 49:1, 11; Ps. 80:8-19; Is. 4:2, 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21, 12:10; Ezek. 15:2-6; Hos. 10:1; Zech. 3:8).

"<u>The</u> true vine" – the one and only, the exclusive one. Anyone connected to another vine (other than Christ) is connected to a false one.

"<u>True</u> vine" – He who is the "truth" (Jn. 14:6) is the real, genuine, source of life and fruitfulness.

By specifying Himself as the <u>true</u> vine, Jesus evidently intends to contrast Himself with Israel, a vine of God's planting which proved unfruitful (Is. 5:1-7).

"Husbandman" = farmer or gardener or vinedresser. The Father tends the branches on the vine (v. 2).

In these final words of Jesus to His disciples (in John 15 – 16), we have some of the most <u>vital</u> statements we will ever ponder. While only a few hours from death, our Lord begins a teaching about grape vines to impart to us some absolutely essential truths.

Many Christians feel like failures; their life doesn't matter much; they don't make a difference for Christ in the world. "Their lives show little or nothing of eternal significance, and they don't know why. Are you one?" (<u>Secrets of the Vine</u>, Bruce Wilkinson, p. 31).

We were saved for the purpose not only of attaining Heaven and escaping from hell, but for the purpose of having a closely-tied relationship with Jesus Christ. We were created and redeemed "for Him."

Col. 1:16
For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:
Rev. 4:11
Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

The fulfilled life is the life that produces fruit. All believers are expected to be fruit bearers;

--The fruit of the Spirit (internal fruit)

Galatians 5:22
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

--The fruit of souls (external fruit)

(John 15:16; Rom. 1:13; John 4:35-38)

Psalm 126:6
He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Notice the progression of fruit-bearing: Our Lord moves from . . .
"not fruit" (v. 2a) . . . to fruit (v. 2b) . . . to more fruit (v. 2c) . . . to much fruit (v. 5, 8)

An unsaved man's life will manifest his unbelief and rebellion against God by the production of bad fruit that flows from the sin nature.

Matthew 7:20
Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.
Hebrews 6:8
But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

But a believer manifests his heart's faith and receptiveness to God's Word by producing a harvest of good fruit – some 100-fold, some 60, and some 30 (Mt. 13:23).

*** Brethren, let us draw close to our Lord Jesus (in daily fellowship) and remain there, so that our lives may be Fruitful!**

The Blessings of Staying Close to the Lord Jesus Christ:

I. ***Remaining Close to Jesus*** **<u>makes Fruit-Bearing</u> <u>POSSIBLE</u> (v.4-5)**

v. 4

"Abide" – the key verb in this context. The word "abide" means to <u>remain</u> or <u>dwell</u> (as in Jn. 14:2 where the noun form has the meaning of an abode or dwelling place).

The word means to <u>stay with</u>; to <u>continue in close proximity</u> (Mt. 26:38); to <u>stay put and not move</u> (Mt. 10:11); or to <u>dwell in something</u> (as in a house) (Acts 16:15).

What Jesus is saying is this: <u>Stay connected</u> with Me (not in relationship, for that issue is God's doing and it is settled, but in <u>fellowship</u>).

In other words, Jesus is saying: "Stay close." "Stick with Me; your abundant life depends on it."

Are we close to Jesus when we don't:
<u>Talk</u> to Him?
<u>Think</u> about Him?
<u>Love</u> Him?
<u>Obey</u> Him?

"Abide in Me and I in you" – the connection is a <u>mutual one</u>.

"The symbolism of the Vine and branches is similar to that of the <u>head and the body</u>: we have a living relationship to Christ and belong to Him" (Wiersbe, p. 355).

"Of itself, a branch is weak and useless. . . the branch cannot produce its own life; it must draw that life from the vine. . . [We as believers must] recognize our own weakness and confess our need for His strength" (Wiersbe, p. 355).

No branch can produce fruit if it is detached from the vine, and no Christian can who is detached from the fellowship of Christ.

v. 5

"Much fruit" – the degree of our fruitfulness is determined by our degree of attachment in close communion with our Lord Jesus.

"Without Me ye can do nothing" = Apart from me, you are not able to do anything (which is of spiritual and eternal significance).

Yes, apart from Christ the natural man can perform (temporarily) physical functions. Most people are detached from Christ in relationship and in fellowship, yet they go to school, work a job, and reap the harvest of their worldly sowing. In the world's eyes they are quite successful.

However, the believer has an extra dimension to his life (a spiritual one), whereby we have the privilege of knowing God's truth, passing on a Godly heritage, demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit, being used of God in reaping souls for His Kingdom, etc.

II. *Remaining Close to Jesus* makes Fruit-Bearing INCREASE (v.2-3)

v. 2
"Every branch" – No exceptions. All branches in Christ are included.

"In Me" - Jesus is describing a branch that is connected to Him (hence, a believer).

"He taketh away" – This word (*airo*) in some context means to lift up or to pick up (EX: of the Jews picking up stones – Jn. 8:59; cp. Jn. 11:41) and in other contexts means to carry away or to spatially remove something from its place (Lk. 11:22; Jn. 16:22). Often if has the idea of both picking up and removing something (Mk. 4:15; Lk. 8:12).

Here, both interpretations are possibilities:

1) One view is that God the Father promptly takes home fruitless believers (the "sin unto death" – 1 Jn. 5:16).

   "As there are suckers that grow out from the plant but add nothing to its usefulness and must be cut away, so an unproductive child of God who persists in his own will may expect to be set aside. God's chastening hand may even remove such a person through death" (Wycliffe, p. 1107).

2) Another view is that God the Father lifts up fruitless believers with the goal that their discouraged, barren branch will be drawn up away from the ground and brought into contact with the sunlight so as to produce fruit.

   (A man who tends a vineyard explains) –

   "'New branches have a natural tendency to train down and grow along the ground,' he explained, 'But they don't bear fruit down there. When branches grow along the ground, the leaves get coated in dust. When it rains, they get muddy and mildewed. The branch becomes sick and useless.'

   'What do you do?' I asked. 'Cut if off and throw it away?'

   'Oh, no!' he exclaimed. The branch is much too valuable for that. We go through the vineyard with a bucket of water looking for those branches. We lift them up and wash them off.' He demonstrated for me with dark, callused hands. 'Then we wrap them around the trellis or tie them up. Pretty soon they're thriving.'" (Wilkinson, p. 34-35)

"Purgeth" – the same word as translated "clean in v. 3.

God is pictured as cleaning off the dead limbs, twigs, and fruitless elements of the branch.

"A vinedresser would cut away dead wood that can breed disease and insects" (Wiersbe, p. 356).

When the dead, lifeless, fruitless elements of a branch are pruned off, the branch becomes more fruitful.

A vinedresser has to be "carefully trained or they can destroy an entire crop. Some vineyards invest two or three years in training the 'pruners' so they know where to cut, how much to cut, and even at what angle to make the cut" (Wiersbe, p. 356).

How does the Father prune us? Sometimes He simply uses the Word to convict and cleanse us (v. 3). Sometimes He must chasten us (Heb. 12:1-11).

God's "purgings" are often painful, perhaps initially sorrowful, but in the end they are beneficial.

--Job was purged by trials
Job 23:10
But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

--David was benefited by trials
Psalm 119:67
Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

--Paul was strengthened by trials (2 Cor. 12:7-10)

--James speaks of the benefits of trials
James 1:2-4
My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; [3] Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. [4] But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

v. 3
Having said that the Father cleanses off (purges) fruitless elements, Jesus now states that the disciples were already clean through the Word Christ had given them (cp. Eph. 5:26).

Positionally, they were cleansed already and in relationship with God, but practically they would receive periodic cleansings so that they could produce more and more fruit.

III. *Remaining Close to Jesus* Avoids the Risk of Being Rendered USELESS (v.6)

Is Jesus (in v. 6) speaking of a believer or non-believer?

If non-believer, Jesus is referring to an apostate, one who abandons his profession but never possessed salvation.

(Some say this is a saved man who loses his salvation due to his desire to depart from Christ, and ends up in the flames of hell. This would contradict the Biblical doctrine of eternal security of salvation. And make the retaining of our salvation dependent on our effort to abide.)

It is my view that Jesus is referring to a believer, but one who is rendered useless (a "castaway") and is set aside to dry up and waste away.

Paul feared being rendered useless.
1 Cor. 9:27
But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Jesus warned against becoming useless.
Matthew 5:13
Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

"If a man abide not in Me" – Note: It is the person who detaches himself. Why would anyone (claiming to be a believer) not want close fellowship with Christ? How does a detachment occur? We lose focus or we wander.

--The allurement of the world becomes more important.
--The appetites of the flesh become more important
--The deceptions of the devil become more important

"It is a known fact that apart from producing grapes, the vine has no use except to be burned for fuel (cf. Ezek. 15:6)" (Wycliffe, p. 1107).

The reference to the fire, therefore, is not a reference to the man but to the dry sticks in the analogy and needs not necessarily apply to the man who is likened unto the dry stick, but is simply a hypothetical situation in which Jesus tells us what happens to useless branches: they are burned.

[Note: We need not press every detail of a metaphor and give it immediate personal application.]

The burning here (if it has any connection to the believer) could apply to a person's fruitless works being burned up at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11-15), but He Himself will be saved from the fire (Ryrie note).

IV. *Remaining Close to Jesus* is <u>the Secret to Receiving ANSWERS TO PRAYER</u> (v.7)

A Christian whose mind and soul is knit to Christ and whose heart and mind is filled with God's Word will be one who is on God's wavelength. You will think like Him; your heart beat will match His; you will walk in step with Him. Therefore, any and every request you make will be exactly what He wanted for you, and you will get answers to every prayer.

This principle of being close to the Lord and receiving what you ask for is also found in Psalm 37:4.

Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

1 John 5:14 conveys a similar promise.

1 John 5:14

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

V. *Remaining Close to Jesus* <u>Results in God being GLORIFIED by your Fruitfulness</u> (v.8a)

Since it is the Father's Spirit who produces the fruit, He receives the glory (the credit, the honor, the praise) when it is produced.

God shines when we are fruitful! Man's purpose on earth is to glorify God.

VI. *Remaining Close to Jesus* <u>Makes You a Real DISCIPLE</u> (v.8b)

"And then you will become (future tense, middle voice – T.R.) **My disciples"** – A believer is not necessarily a disciple.

You become a believer by faith, but you become a disciple by <u>fruit</u>. One who follows the disciplines of his Master, who stays in touch with the Teacher (Jesus) is the one who becomes a real disciple!

CONCLUSION:

Convicting hymn: "Must I Go and Empty-Handed"

Let's get close again to our Lord Jesus that we might be fruitful. How?

1) Repent of sin (confession)
2) Get back to prayer (communion)
3) Submit to His will (consecration)

Principle 1: *To break through to abiding, I must deepen the quality of my devoted time with God*.

--Set apart the kind of time that will build relationship.
--Savor God's Word to you.
--Talk and listen to a Person
--Keep a daily written record of what God is doing in your life.

Principle 2: *To break through to abiding I must broaden my devoted time—taking it from a morning appointment to an all-day attentiveness to His presence. – Wilkenson pp.106-112*