

ABIDING IN JESUS
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August 27, 2017

John 15:1-8

1. Last week we looked at the relationship between loving and obeying Jesus.
2. Jesus was in the process of providing His disciples with important truths that would take on new meaning once the Holy Spirit filled them on the Day of Pentecost.
3. Here Jesus focused on the correlation between bearing fruit and abiding in Him.
4. Jesus and the disciples had left the Upper Room (John 14:31) and were making their way towards the Garden of Gethsemane.
5. As they walked along Jesus continued to teach.
6. They may have been walking by a vineyard when Jesus paused to share these truths with the disciples.
7. The disciples were not vineyard owners, but they probably had some knowledge of how grapes were cultivated.
8. When Jesus stated, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser," a mental picture would have immediately come to mind.
9. Jesus taught the disciples that God **positions** us and **prunes** us that we might **produce** much fruit.

I. God positions us.

A. He positions us by placing us into Christ just like a vinedresser might graft a new branch to a grapevine. (When Jesus spoke of being the true vine He was referring to the main part or root stock of a grape producing plant.)

1. Rom 11:17-18

17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the **rich root of the olive tree**, 18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.

2. Gal 3:26-27

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

B. As God tends His vineyard He is constantly **repositioning** us in order that we might bear fruit. (Grape vines need adequate air, sunlight, and freedom from dirt and debris to thrive.)

1. Sometimes a branch that is already clean and pruned (verse 3) becomes unfruitful.

2. Other branches may shade it from the sun, the air may not be able to move freely around it, or it may become dislodged and bend down to the ground and become covered with dirt and mud.

3. Even while Jesus was talking He may have seen such a branch.

4. Perhaps He paused to lift it up, gently dust it off, and replace it to an advantageous position.
- C. Verse 2 troubled me for a long time because it seems to indicate that a person can be in Christ and then be taken away or discarded.
1. I think the problem lies with the translation.
 2. The Greek word translated “takes away” can also mean “to raise up, elevate, or lift up.”
 3. An Englishmen’s word search reveals that it is often translated this way in the Scriptures. Two examples:
 - a. Matt 4:5-6

5 Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON THEIR HANDS THEY WILL **BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.**'"
 - b. Luke 9:23-24

23 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and **take up** his cross daily and follow Me. 24 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.
 4. If we change “takes away” to “lifts up” we have a much truer picture of how a vinedresser tends his vineyard.
- D. The repositioning process is referred to as discipline. Hebrews 12:6
 “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and scourges (cleanses) every son whom He receives.”
- E. We need to be aware of where we are spiritually in relationship to Jesus Christ.
- F. What is going or is not going on in our lives that may be impacting the intimacy of our relationship to our Lord and Savior?

II. God prunes us.

- A. Pruning can involve dead wood. 6
 NOTE: Not the same condition as verse 2.
- B. More often it involves removing live growth that is not needed or advantageous to the productivity of the vine.
- C. Notice Jesus said, “Every branch that bears (some) fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.”
- D. There are many things in our lives that are not necessarily sinful, but they do not promote fruitfulness.
- E. In Hebrews 12:1 we are admonished to, “Lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”
1. An encumbrance is something that weighs us down.
 2. An entanglement or sin is something that trips us up.
- F. God disciplines us, prunes us, where entanglements and encumbrances are a factor.

G. We need to ask ourselves what are some of the things that God might want to remove or reduce in our lives that we might produce more fruit?

CAUTIONARY NOTE: God cannot be ignored or trifled with. We need to take Hebrews 12:1 seriously because if we do not the consequences may be severe.

As Christians we should guard against being stubborn or resistant. Proverbs 29:1

“A man who hardens his neck (stiff-necked) after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.”

III. God’s goal is much fruit.

A. Notice the progression here: no fruit, some fruit, more fruit, much fruit.

B. In order to bear much fruit we must:

1. Submit and respond to the lifting up and pruning process administered by God the Father.
2. Abide in the vine by maintaining a vital, intimate, ongoing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. 4-5

C. Those who abide in Christ:

1. Will bear much fruit.
2. Will have power in prayer.
3. Will glorify God.
4. Will prove to be Jesus’ disciples.

D. What constitutes fruit?

1. Good works that are the outgrowth of our relationship with Christ. Matt 5:16
16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."
2. Lives that are eternally impacted for Christ. John 15:16
3. Manifesting the life of Christ. Gal 5:22-24
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. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

APPLICATION

1. Can you confidently say, “I am in Christ?”
2. Are you cooperating with or resisting God as He works to increase your fruitfulness?
3. How would you evaluate your level of fruit bearing?
4. Is it your heart’s desire to bear much fruit?
5. You are out of step with God if you do not desire and pursue with all your heart what God desires.