

Abiding in Christ

John 15:1-8

October 31, 2004

Intro

Jesus has just finished the Last Supper with His disciples and He also gave them crucial words to prepare them for His imminent death.

He then left there with His disciples headed for the Mount of Olives where He would be arrested.

Somewhere on the way, He continues to give them great words of importance they will need to know. We are also given these words because we also need these words in our lives.

These verses tell the importance of abiding in Christ so we will bear much fruit in Him.

I. Jesus is the Vine, We are the Branches

A. He is the true vine

- **In other words, he is the true fulfillment of the scriptures.**

Isaiah 5:2, “He dug it all around, removed its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it and also hewed out a wine vat in it; then He expected it to produce good grapes, but it produced only worthless ones.”

- The nation of Israel was a like a vineyard planted by and tended by God. They did not bring for the fruit God desired, so Jesus, then, is the **true vine**.
- It is He who will produce the fruit God desired to see through the centuries.
- **The Father is the vinedresser. This is word, “husbandman,” or georgos in the Greek.**
- It is He who cares and tends the vine.
- It is the vinedresser who expected fruit, but there was none.

Isaiah 5:12, “They do not pay attention to the deeds of the Lord, nor do they consider the work of His hands.”

B. The branches of no fruit are removed

- Jesus is the true vine of Israel, but they did not produce, they did not pay attention to the deeds of the Lord, or the work of His hands...
- So they will be cut off.

Illus – Israel would not receive the life-giving sap of Christ, so it did not bring fruit. Just like the fig tree that Jesus came up to that had no figs.

Judas recently became a vivid picture of this very thing. Given an opportunity to bring fruit, but there was none.

Hebrews 6:7-8, “For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to

those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.”

C. The fruitful branches are pruned

- There is a play of words in the Greek that we cannot see in the English.
- The best translation is when there was no fruit, He cut off, when there is fruit, He cuts back, so as to cleanse the vine from unproductivity.

Illus – Last year Jordi got into a mood to cut back our shrubs, some, even to the point that I wondered if they were going to make it, but they came healthier than ever.

Illus – For me, God did a work of trimming in my music. I used to listen to some very worldly music, but God changed my desires.

Like the song I learned in Africa, “My desire, my desire, my desire. My desire is to serve the Lord.”

- God may be doing a pruning work also in your life, if so, it is important to know that God does this in order to produce more fruit.
- This is done by the Word of God (verse 3).

Illus – Have you ever felt the Word of God cutting back some area in your life? It is a good process!

II. The Fruit Which God Desires

A. Not sour grapes

- There is something distinctly different about the taste of a sour grape a sweet one.

Isaiah 5:3-4, “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between Me and My vineyard. What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones?”

- “What more could I have done,” He has done so much to show us His love for us. We have to reject with a hardness of heart to overcome the love which God ours out to us.

B. The fruit God desires is Christ-likeness

- The fruit God desires is the character of Christ in us.
- The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have the same character qualities and God desires to see these bearing fruit in us as well.

Galatians 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

- Love, joy and peace are the three clustered together. You see these qualities given by Jesus.

- Compare **John 14:17, 15:9, and 15:11.**
- We are being changed, into His image.

C. Fruit which ripens in season

- It is important to remember that fruit does not ripen all at once.
- There is a process that happens in our lives. We are changed from one degree of glory to another.

II Corinthians 3:18, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

- The key is that God wants us to continue to increase in fruitfulness.

Romans 12:1-2, “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

- How does change happen? Do we by straining bring this result?

Illus – A grape does not strain to ripen, but simply abides on the vine...

III. The Key is in “Abiding”

A. Abiding in Christ

- Verse 4; as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself.
- “Apart from Me, you can do nothing.”

Illus – This means that a person can be very, very busy, but do nothing.

- But if we “abide” in Him, we bear much fruit.
- Abiding in Him is to stay close and receive from Him.
- It is very important to consider what kind of things we receive; what comes into our heart and soul through our eyes and ears.

Luke 8:14-15, “The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.”

- We need to stay at a place of receiving from Him regularly.

John 8:31-33, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

B. Christ abiding in us

- We must have both of these to be true in order to produce the fruit God desires.

Illus – When I was young naïve, I used to check to see if spark plugs worked by holding them next to something. This is not a clever way to learn about spark.

But I did learn that you must both spark and fuel.

- In the same way, we must both abide in Christ and be filled by His Word, and we need Christ to be the power of our lives.

Psalm 73:25-26, “Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

- We need to stop trusting in our cleverness and power, and expect God to be the strength of our lives.

Conclusion

May we truly desire to bring from our lives the fruit God desires. But we must also know that this is God’s work, and the key is in simply abiding in Christ and trusting in His power and strength in our lives.