

The title for John 15 could be *Requirements for a Fruitful Life*. This chapter emphasizes two great truths: our personal relationship with the Lord and our divinely appointed mission to go and bear fruit that will last.

In the Old Testament, God spoke of the vine as a symbol of Israel (Ps 80:9-16; Is 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Jer 2:21; 12:10; Ezek 15:1-8; 17:1-21; 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1,2). In John 15, Jesus expanded the analogy. As the fulfillment of the Lord's purpose for Israel, the great Son of David identified Himself as the vine and His followers as branches.

At the time of year when Jesus spoke chapter 15, branches of grapevines would be budding in Jerusalem. In 15:1-17, through an extended metaphor of the vine and branches, Jesus set forth the basis of Christian living. Jesus used the imagery of agricultural life at the time; i.e. vines and vine crops (Matt 20:1-16; 21:23-41; Mark 12:1-9; Luke 13:69; 20:9-16). He specifically identified Himself as the true vine and the Father as the caretaker of the vine. The vine has two types of branches 1) branches that bear fruit (vv. 2,8) and 2) branches that do not (vv. 2,6).

This allegory is at the heart of Jesus's farewell discourse to the disciples. The OT used the vineyard or vine as a symbol for Israel, God's covenant people, especially in two vineyard songs (Isaiah 5:1-7; 27:2-6). However, Israel's failure to produce fruit resulted in divine judgment. Jesus by contrast, is the true vine, and his followers are to remain in him and produce much fruit for God.

ABIDE OR BE CAST OUT

"Unless anyone abides in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned" (v. 6).

- I. "Unless anyone abides in Me"
 - A. Verse 5 ended with: "For apart from Me you are not able to do anything."
 - B. μένω - Abides, remains, dwells, continue, tarry – occurs 10 times in the opening 10 verses of chapter 15. Twice it is in verse 4 and again in verse 5. Now it appears in verse 6. We remain, abide, again in verses 7,9,10,16. John told us to remain in Christ 34 times in the gospel, 20 times in his first epistle, twice in 2 John. You would think Jesus is trying to tell us something.
 - C. To abide in Christ is to follow His example of a life obedient to the will of God.
 - D. Jesus as the vine will fulfil His part of the relationship as long as the branches keep in vital union with Him.
 - E. He is talking to His disciples. Christians. Christians are connected to the vine, Christ. The problem is, are they allowing His life to flow into their branch?
 - F. These verses are talking to Christians. They are not saying one can lose his salvation. That is not possible. They are saying that your life will have no value, you will have no reward. All you will have is burned up as you have no gold, silver or precious stone. All you have is wood, hay and stubble.

1. Notice gold, silver and precious stones have value when taken out of the ground; they have value in themselves.
 2. Notice wood is cut down. Hay is cut down and stubble is what is left over.
 3. Jesus is saying in verse 6, "Don't get cut off from Me."
- II. "Unless anyone abides in Me, he is cast out as a branch, withered."
- A. When one does not abide in Christ, he is a castaway, shipwreck, dead branch.
 - B. Go back to verse 2: "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away ..."
 - C. Cast out – tossed aside as useless, having no value, unimportant
 1. Talking to a lady this past week, her church is dying because of sin in the life of the pastor. The church is cast away. The pastor is not abiding in Christ and as a result the church is cast out as a withered branch.
 2. We completed the study of the seven churches in Revelation 2-3. There were many warnings to these churches to reconnect to Christ lest they be cast aside as one does to a withered branch.
 - D. "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" (John 6:37).
 - E. Withered branch
 1. Notice the picture. The branch had life at one time.
 - a. There are far too many Christians who are old, withered-up branches.
 2. Notice the picture. The branch is withered, but not dead.
 - a. If the branch connects to the vine again, life will return.
 - F. Withered branches are cut off as they draw valuable energy from the fruit bearing branches.
 1. Be a fruit-bearing branch rather than a withered branch.
- III. "Unless anyone abides in Me, He is gathered and cast into the fire and burned."
- A. He is gathered.
 - B. He is cast into the fire.
 1. Fire is a common symbol for divine judgment (Is 30:27; 66:24; Mt 3:12; 5:22; 18:8; 25:4; 2 Peter 3:7).
 - C. He is burned.
 1. In Matthew 3, John the Baptist is talking to the Pharisees and Sadducees. He told them to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. "[A]nd now the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matthew 3:8-11).
 2. This refers to the judgment of believers at the judgment seat of Christ. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor 5:10).

3. The imagery here is one of destruction.
4. “They are burned.” This refers to the works of the believer. The Christian who does not abide in Christ cannot do what pleases God; therefore, his works will be burned at the judgment seat of Christ, though he himself will be saved (1 Cor. 3:11-15).
5. Branches that no longer produce, that are dead, have one value: firewood, as they are all dried up.
 - a. Don’t let your Christian life dry up – Keep it alive, connected to Christ, letting His life flow in you, giving you life.
 - b. We had a large tree in the back yard. It died. Today, the entire tree went through the chipper. It is sawdust. Don’t let your spiritual life end up in the spiritual chipper.

“Unless anyone abides in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered.”

“Unless anyone abides in Me, men gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned.” If you take nothing else from today’s message, take this away: abide, remain, dwell, continue, tarry in Christ. To not abide in Christ, you will slowly wither away as you are not connected to the life-giving source. To not abide in Christ, your life will be burned up. End up a waste. Jesus is telling the Twelve there are two choices for them. Abide in Christ or be cast out, cast aside. What choice will you choose?