

To Abide in Christ

John 15:1-8

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

(15:1-8) **Introduction—Jesus Christ, Facing Death**: Jesus was facing the most terrible scene in all human history. The Son of God was about to be murdered at the hands of men. All that He had to face was weighing ever so heavily upon His mind, in particular the reaction of everyone to Him and their fate. He had come to save them all, and few were responding in a genuine way. He was even facing the collapse of His own inner circle. Most tragically they were falling away.

- ⇒ One disciple was in the very process of betraying Him (Judas).
- ⇒ The leader of the disciples was to deny Him three times, even by cursing (Peter).
- ⇒ The other disciples were to flee and desert Him.

And then, there was the world of men who were rejecting Him: the religionists who strongly professed to know and live for God, and the non-religionists who had no attachment to God and professed none.

He had come to save them all and not one was standing with Him in His most needful hour. The thought of it all raced through His mind, and as He thought, He recalled the vine of God so often described in the Old Testament (Psalm 80:8-16; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 15:1-8; Ezekiel 19:10; Hosea 10:1). In it He saw a graphic lesson that the disciples needed to learn, the great lesson of “The Vine and the Branches”—the relationship of Jesus to the people of the world.

1. **Jesus, the Vine**; God, the Vinedresser; and man, the branch (v.1).
2. Unfruitful branches: are taken away (v.2).
3. Fruitful branches (v.2-4).
4. Unattached branches (v.4-6).
5. Attached branches: results and promises (v.7-8).

1. (15:1) Jesus Christ, The Vine: Jesus is the Vine; God is the Vinedresser or the Cultivator or the Gardener; and men are branches.

1. Jesus is the *true* Vine. He is the genuine vine, not a false, counterfeit vine. In fact, He is opposed to the counterfeit, the sham, the deceitful, and the *pretender*. (See John 1:9.)

2. God is the Vinedresser. He is the One who carefully planted the Vine (Christ) and waters and feeds the Vine. He is the One who cares for, looks after, and watches over the Vine and the branches. He is the One who prunes and purges, cleans and protects the Vine and its branches.

3. Men are branches. And note, they are all judged on the basis of how they relate to the *True Vine*. They are...

- either *unfruitful* (John 15:2) or *fruitful* branches of the true Vine (John 15:2-3).
- either *unattached* (John 15:4-6) or *attached* branches of the true Vine (John 15:7-8).

2. (15:2) Profession, False—Believers, Warning to—Fruit Bearing—Judgment of

Believers: these are the unfruitful branches. They are taken away. Note that these are *attached branches*. They differ from the unattached branches (John 15:4-6). Jesus said that they are “in me,” but they have a problem: they bear no fruit.

1. The unfruitful branches *did become* attached to Christ. They did have some *organic* relationship to Him. There was a time, a point when they began to bud and sprout. They even grew into branches. They...

- listened to Jesus and the gospel.
- opened their ears.
- made a profession.
- were baptized.
- seemed capable of bearing fruit.
- appeared to be fruitful branches.

2. The branches are unfruitful. They are “in” the Vine, a part of it, but they simply bear no fruit. What does this mean?

a. Unfruitful branches do *not relate enough* to Christ; they do not draw enough nourishment from Him...

- to draw life.
- to bear fruit.
- to continue in the Vine (cp. Matthew 24:13; Matthew 13:13).

b. Unfruitful branches are *not genuine enough* to bear fruit. Their profession is...

- more profession than possession.
- more pretending than being.
- more deception than truth.
- more counterfeit than real.

c. Unfruitful branches become apostate and deserters—men and women who abandon the faith. (Cp. 1 John 2:19.)

“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22).

“He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none” (Luke 13:6).

“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16).

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).

“And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices” (2 Peter 2:13-14).

3. God “taketh away” (airei) the unfruitful branches. The word means to take away and to remove. In relation to the vine, the branch is pruned, removed, and taken away. This is a severe warning to every branch “in” the vine, to make sure his profession is genuine enough to bear fruit.

Scripture says at least two things about the judgment of unfruitful branches that sin.

4. The unfruitful branches that sin are taken away and removed from the Vine and destroyed by fire.

“Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Matthew 3:10).

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (1 John 2:19).

“Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have” (Luke 8:18).

“But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing: whose end is to be burned” (Hebrews 6:8).

5. The unfruitful branches that sin are chastened and disciplined by being taken away and removed through death (see 1 John 5:16). The Bible warns professing believers of severe chastening, the chastening of...

- sinful behavior that causes loss of all reward by fire—a loss so great a man is stripped as much as a burned-out building. It is the loss of all except the very salvation of a man (1 Cor. 3:11-15, esp. 1 Cor. 3:15).
- sinful behavior that destroys the flesh so that the spirit may be saved (1 Cor. 5:5).
- sinful behavior that causes death (1 Cor. 11:29-30; 1 John 5:16).
- sinful behavior that merits no escape (Hebrews 2:1-3; Hebrews 12:25f).
- sinful behavior that prohibits man from ever repenting again (Hebrews 6:4f).

- sinful behavior that causes man to miss God's rest (Hebrews 4:1f).
- sinful behavior that prohibits any future sacrifice for sins and merits terrible punishment (Hebrews 10:26f).

The point must be heeded, for Scripture gives severe warnings to believers, that is, to the branches "in" the Vine. The branches must make sure they are bearing fruit or else face severe judgment.

3. (15:2-4) **Fruit-bearing—Word of God—Believers, Cleansing of:** these are the fruitful branches. Note three points.

1. Fruitful branches are pruned. All bad spots, useless buds, misdirected shoots, and discolored leaves are pruned off. Even fruitful believers have spots, buds, shoots, and leaves that are bad, useless, misdirected, and discolored. Believers have areas and things that must be cleaned away and cleared up, areas of...

| | |
|------------|---------------|
| Thought | Behavior |
| Attitude | Relationships |
| Commitment | Service |
| Passion | Willingness |
| Motives | |

2. The purpose for pruning is *one fold*: to prepare the branch to bear more fruit. The purpose is not to punish, not to hurt and damage the branch. Note two things about fruit-bearing.
 - a. The fruit a believer is to bear.
 - b. The different stages of fruit-bearing. All believers are not 100% fruit-bearers. Some bear 60%, others only 30%. There are degrees of fruit-bearing, of commitment and dedication to Christ.

"But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold" (Matthew 13:8).

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matthew 16:27).

"His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:23).

"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour" (2 Tim. 2:20).

3. Note how the fruitful branches are pruned (katharoi) or purged and cleansed. There are three ways.

- a. Branches are cleansed by the words which Jesus has given to men, by the Word of the Lord Himself. The Word of God refines men by purging away all the dross and contamination, pollution and dirt that clings to them. When a man comes to the Word of God sincerely, the Word of God shows...
- what he is doing and what he is not doing.
 - where he fails and how he fails.
 - the sins of commission and of omission.

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

“And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19).

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Peter 1:22).

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Psalm 119:9).

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11).

- b. Branches are cleansed by the mirror of the Word of God. When a man looks into the Word of God, he reflects both himself in his shortcomings and Christ in His perfection. The Word of God forces man to measure himself against Christ.

“For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was” (James 1:23-24).

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

- c. Branches are cleansed by “abiding” in Jesus.

Note exactly what Jesus said: “Abide in me, and I in you.” This can mean at least two things.

- ⇒ It can mean a promise: “Abide in me and I will abide in you.” The believer is thereby cleansed by his position or by being in Christ (John 13:6-11).
- ⇒ It can mean a command: “See to it that you abide in me, and I in you.” The believer is cleansed by continuing in Christ and remaining faithful.

4. (15:4-6) Fruit-bearing—Unbelievers, Life of—Judgment: these are the unattached branches. Jesus said four things.

1. The unattached branch is “out” and off by itself; it is not abiding in the Vine and not attached. Note the words “of itself” (John 15:4), off by itself. To say that a branch must be attached and abide in the vine may sound redundant at first. But the truth is pointed: there is no life and no fruit in life apart from Christ. Just as a branch suspended out in mid-air or lying on the ground without any attachment to the vine is lifeless and meaningless, so a man on the earth without attachment to Christ is lifeless and meaningless.

Those who seek life and meaning someplace other than in Christ are doomed to failure. The unattached and suspended branch is of and by itself—all alone upon this earth—and it is doomed to be by itself.

2. The unattached branch cannot bear fruit, not real and permanent fruit that is *acceptable or pleasing* to God. It cannot bear...
 - any good or righteousness that is acceptable to God (Romans 6:21-23).
 - character that is acceptable to God (Galatians 5:22-23).
 - converts to the saving grace of God (Romans 1:13; Titus 2:11-15).
3. The unattached branch does not understand the nature of bearing fruit in life: the fact that he can do nothing—cannot live and produce life—apart from Christ. No one bears fruit apart from Christ...
 - no one lives or experiences life.
 - a man is helpless to find the meaning, purpose, and significance to life.
4. The unattached branch is doomed. He is cast forth to wither and to be gathered and cast into the fire and burned.
 - a. Cast forth (eblethe exo): to be plucked off and cast out, thrown away, discarded, disposed of. The unattached branch wants and chooses to be unattached, so God lets it. It is given over and given up to be unattached. God abandons it. It is cast off and out of the way and left to itself, to do as it chooses. (See Romans 1:24-32)
 - b. Withered (exeranthe): to be dried up, wrinkled, peeled; to become sapless and bare; to lose energy and strength. The unattached branch experiences everything withering away—its...
 - gifts and abilities
 - life and body
 - family and friends
 - fate and destiny
 - hopes and dreams
 - confidence and assurance
 - purpose and meaning

- c. Gathered (sunagousin): the day of judgment arrives. In the Greek text, who it is that gathers is not given. The Greek simply says, “they gathered.” This is probably God having His angels gather up all the unattached branches, “all that offend, and them which do iniquity” (cp. Matthew 13:41).
- d. Cast into the fire and “burned” (kaietai).

“Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew 13:30).

“So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:49-50).

“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:46).

“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15).

“But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile” (Romans 2:8-9).

5. (15:7-8) Fruit-bearing: these are the attached branches, and the results and promises made to them. These are the same as the fruitful branches mentioned earlier (John 15:2-3). Jesus had already covered the pruning or the disciplining of the branches, so here He covers the promises made to them and the results of their “abiding” in Him. Note that the promises and results are conditional: “If ye abide in me...” Note also that the words of Christ must abide in the believer. The thought is that a believer must take the Words of Christ and...

- study and learn them.
- have his thoughts and desires controlled by them.
- be motivated and controlled by them.

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15; cp. John 14:15, 21, 24; John 15:10, 14).

The promises and results of abiding in Christ are threefold.

1. The attached branch receives nourishment, that is, answered prayers.
 - a. The branch is attached to the vine. It abides in the vine: dwells and lives and never faces a moment when it is not attached to the vine. So it is with the believer. The believer is attached to Christ: he abides, dwells, lives, and walks in the very presence of Christ and never faces a moment when he is not attached and walking in Christ. A

genuine believer walks in constant fellowship and prayer with the Lord. He is always abiding and sharing with the Lord.

- b. Similarly, the vine is always nourishing the branch, always sending its life-giving food and drink to the branch. So it is with Christ. Christ is always sharing His life-giving nourishment with the believer, always answering prayer and meeting the needs of the genuine believer.

“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24).

“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matthew 21:22).

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1 John 5:14-15).

2. The attached branch glorifies God by bearing much fruit. Remember what the fruit is. It is...
- righteousness.

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Romans 6:22).

“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:11).

“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10).

- godly character.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23).

- converts.

“Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles” (Romans 1:13).

When men see fruit in the life of a believer, they are forced...

- to turn their mind to God.
- to acknowledge that only God’s power could do such.
- to desire God to save them.
- to begin asking God for help.
- to accept God or to close their mind and reject God.

God is glorified by the fruit born in the life of a believer, glorified by *some men* beginning to think about God and calling upon Him.

3. The attached branch proves he is a disciple by bearing fruit. There are ways to tell if a person really is attached to Christ:

- ⇒ Does he bear fruit?
- ⇒ Does he live righteously or do shameful things (Romans 6:21-23)?
- ⇒ Does he bear “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22-23)?
- ⇒ Does he lead the lost to Christ (Romans 1:13)?

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35).

Fruit-bearing—Abide

John 15:1-8

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(15:1-8) Fruit-bearing—Abide: there are four stages of fruit-bearing given:

- (1) no fruit (John 15:2),
- (2) fruit (John 15:2),
- (3) more fruit (John 15:2), and
- (4) much fruit (John 15:5, 8).

What does it mean to say a Christian is to bear fruit? It means to bear converts (**Romans 1:13**), to bear righteousness (**Romans 6:21-23**), to bear Christian character or the fruit of the Spirit (see note—**Galatians 5:22-23**).

Note also the conditions for bearing fruit in life: cleansing (**John 15:3**), abiding in Christ (**John 15:5**), and obedience (**John 15:10, 12**).

A true Christian is a person who really does abide in Christ (**1 John 2:10**). John said that to abide in Christ means eight things.

1. **A person walks in open confession before God.** He walks through life opening up his life to God; he confesses all known sin. He does not walk in sin, and he does not allow any sin to go unconfessed (**1 John 1:6-10**).
2. **A person walks and fellowships with Christ.** He lives and moves and has his being with Christ. He communes and lives in a consciousness of God's presence, and from God's presence he learns of God, and he draws the strength and authority to live victoriously day by day (**1 John 2:6; 1 John 2:27; cp. Psalm 16:11; Proverbs 3:5-6**).
3. **A person continues in the church; he has not gone out from the church** (**1 John 2:19**).
4. **A person possesses confidence, an unashamedness in life that prepares him for eternity** (**1 John 2:28**).
5. **A person does not walk in continuous sin** (**1 John 3:6**). He experiences constant victory over sin.
6. **A person actively surrenders himself to obey God's commandments** (**1 John 3:24**).
7. **A person experiences the indwelling presence and witness of the Spirit** (**1 John 4:12-13**).
8. **A person dwells in love and unity and fellowship with all other believers** (**John 17:21-23; 1 John 4:16; cp. 1 John 4:20**).

Abide—Abiding

John 15:4

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

(15:4) **Abide—Abiding**: to abide, dwell, continue, stay, sojourn, rest in or upon. It is being set and fixed and remaining there, continuing on and on in a fixed state, condition, or being. It should be noted that the more a branch abides in the vine, that is, the closer the branch abides to the heart of the vine, the more nourishment a branch draws from the vine and the more fruit it bears.

“He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him” (John 6:56).

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16-17).

“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love” (John 15:10).

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1 John 2:6).

“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” (1 John 2:28).

“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him” (1 John 3:6).

“And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us” (1 John 3:24).

“Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit” (1 John 4:13).

“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:15-16).

“For the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever” (2 John 2).

“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9).