

JOHN 15:1-11
“I AM THE VINE!”

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 15 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

As you remember from our previous studies, we are hours away from Jesus being arrested and then crucified for our sins, for the sins of the world!

For Jesus and His men, they were celebrating the Passover meal. And, at one point, before Jesus instituted Communion as a sign of the New Covenant, Judas left to betray Jesus!

In this upper room, Jesus is instructing these men about what is ahead, what they will need to do, how to carry on with the ministry when He is gone!

And the whole idea of Jesus being gone troubled them. That is why Jesus said in John 14:1-4, **“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.”**

Here we see Jesus comfort them and tell them that yes, He is going away, but He is coming back to take them with Him.

And there was confusion about the way, how to get there and Jesus makes it very clear as He tells them, **“... ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”** John 14:6.

There is no other way, no other means, our relationship with God the Father is based on receiving Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. He is the only way!

He also tells them that He is not going to leave them as orphans when He leaves. The Father is going to send the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth who will be *with* them and after the death and resurrection of Jesus the Holy Spirit will be *in* them!

As they finish up in the upper room, where they had the Passover meal, they are going to enter out of the city, out the eastern gate, past the Temple, through the Brook Kidron and up the Mount of Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane.

And I believe it is on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, as they pass by the Temple with its beautiful doors, that we get the teaching here in John chapter 15.

Remember what Jesus told them as John chapter 14 closed, “. . . Arise, let us go from here.” John 14:31.

So Jesus and His eleven men, remember Judas is not with them, left the upper room as I have said.

Keep in mind that the gates of the city were always left open during Passover and the reason for that was to accommodate all the traveling pilgrims who were coming to Jerusalem for this feast.

I want you to picture in your mind these beautiful gates that in Jesus’s day was the Eastern Gate or the Beautiful Gate but later on it was called the Golden Gate and it is here that Jesus and His men were passing through. These gates were forged in Greece, and they were brought to Jerusalem through the Aegean Sea and placed in Herod’s temple.

I think it is interesting that it is referred to as Herod's temple, not just because he built it or refurbished the second temple, but it truly was not the Lord's Temple since He left it long ago, before the Babylonians came and took the Jews away captive! (Ezekiel 10-11)

Now these gates were not made of gold, they were made of bronze, but they did look like gold as the sun shined upon them.

And as we have seen, Jesus is a master storyteller. And here, on these gates was a grape vine. And as they passed through them, as the light of the full moon shined down upon them, He taught His men about the true vine and the branches.

I have called these verses we will be looking at this morning – ***"I AM THE VINE!"***

And I have broken them down into the following points. They are,

THE TRUE VINE AND VINEDRESSER – JOHN 15:1

THE JESUS BRANCHES – JOHN 15:3-5

THE JUDAS BRANCHES – JOHN 15:6

ABIDING IN HIM – JOHN 15:7-10

THE RESULTS OF ABIDING IN HIM – JOHN 15:11

So we have some powerful lessons for us here in John chapter 15 and my prayer is that as we go through them we would not only hear them but apply them to our lives.

Remember, from John chapter 13 through chapter 17 Jesus is teaching His men some powerful lessons before He is arrested and crucified.

With that as our background, let's begin reading in John chapter 15, beginning in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

JOHN 15**VERSE 1**

Notice how Jesus starts out. He says, “**I AM the true vine . . .**” John 15:1.

Keep in mind that this is the seventh and last of the “***I AM***” statements, the ***EGO EIMI*** (i-mee) in the Greek, made by Jesus in this Gospel of John.

Remember in Exodus chapter 3, when God called Moses to deliver the children of Israel from their bondage in Egypt. And Moses wanted to know what he should tell them, who sent him to do this?

And the Lord tells him, “**I AM**” or the eternal One, the all-becoming One has sent him!

The Hebrew consonants ***YHWH*** are how it is written because they did not insert the vowels and thus, there is speculation on how it is pronounced.

Some say it is ***Yahweh***, which I believe is correct. And others say ***Jehovah***. We are not really sure.

Now, this combination of consonants, ***YHWH*** is known as ***TETRAGRAMMATON*** or “***four letters.***”

And we are told in the Gospel of John that Jesus was that voice in the burning bush, that He is the ***Great I AM***. In John 8:58 Jesus told the Jewish religious leaders - ***BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM!***

And that makes Jesus our all-becoming One, that no matter what we are going through He will meet us where we are.

I believe the Lord was telling Moses this very thing – “***Moses, don’t worry, I AM with you, and you have nothing to fear!***”

May we too remember that and apply it to our lives – He is the great “***I AM***” not the great “***I WAS***” or the great “***I WILL BE***”!

Look at what we have seen in regard to Jesus being the ***Great I AM***, Almighty God here in the Gospel of John.

And keep in mind that Jesus made these statements, He is calling Himself the ***Great I AM!***

Those statements that Jesus made are as follows,

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE (John 6:35)

I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (John 8:12)

I AM THE DOOR FOR THE SHEEP (John 10:7)

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD (John 10:11, 14)

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE (John 11:25)

I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE (John 14:6)

I AM THE VINE (John 15:1)

You see, Jesus becomes to us what we need. He is the becoming one and thus, He is our spiritual food, He is our light to see by, He is the door to enter in through, He is the good shepherd to lead us, He has power over death, He is the only way to the Father and now we see here that He is the vine and we are the branches, and thus, He has become to us the nourishment we need to grow and produce fruit by.

In fact, that is the purpose for your life, to produce fruit, for a fruit tree that doesn't produce fruit is worthless and cut down!

Now, in saying that Jesus is the vine, and He is, as you look at the Scriptures you will see that Israel is called a “***vine.***”

Let me give you a few examples and show you what then happened to them.

In Psalm 80:8-9 we are told, **“You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations, and planted it. You prepared room for it, And caused it to take deep root, And it filled the land.”**

God brought Israel out from Egypt into the land He promised them, and they spread out from the Mediterranean Sea to the west, and to the Euphrates River on the east. And God likens them to a vine which He planted.

In Isaiah chapter 5 we are told, **“Now let me sing to my Well-beloved A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard On a very fruitful hill. . . . For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.”** Isaiah 5:1, 7.

The focus is on God’s vineyard or the nation of Israel, primarily the Southern Kingdom of Judah and it speaks of how God has brought forth this vineyard, brought it to life.

God planted them on Mount Zion and provided protection, nourishment, rich and fertile land with the expectation they would produce good fruit.

And as you read through these verses here in Isaiah chapter 5 you will see that this judgment came upon them because they did not produce good grapes but wild grapes.

And we see that God steps back and as He lets go of them, we then see His judgment poured out. They were going to be taken into captivity, the land would be desolate, dry, weeds and thorns would grow instead of crops.

And that is exactly what happened as the Babylonians came in and took them captive and destroyed the land.

We see this again in Jeremiah 2:21-22 as well. We are told, **“Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me Into the degenerate plant of an alien vine? For though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap, Yet your iniquity is marked before Me,” says the Lord God.**”

God planted them, gave them all they needed to bear much fruit, but they turned from the Lord; they sought after other gods, playing the harlot before the Lord!

Why didn't God do something?

He did all that He could do except force them to return to Him. God will not force His people to love Him because that is not true love. He has given us a choice and how often we turn from the One who loves us so much and embrace empty idols!

Now, here in Jeremiah 2:22 we are told that they are trying to cleanse themselves with soap, but they could not remove the iniquity that was in their lives.

What is that speaking of?

This is most likely speaking of the reformation that Josiah brought to the nation. For the most part it was all outward and superficial and because of that God is telling them that no matter how hard they try, they will never be able to wash themselves clean from their sin by their own efforts.

God wanted their hearts! They were willing to give God a superficial cleansing that they had done themselves and God says, **“Yet your iniquity is marked before Me.”**

And lastly, in Hosea 10:1-2, and this is from The Living Bible, we are told, “**How prosperous Israel is—a luxuriant vine all filled with fruit! But the more wealth I give her, the more she pours it on the altars of her heathen gods; the richer the harvests I give her, the more beautiful the statues and idols she erects. The hearts of her people are false toward God. They are guilty and must be punished. God will break down their heathen altars and smash their idols.**”

God had blessed the Northern Kingdom of Israel, they brought forth an abundance of fruit and instead of bringing glory to God for what He provided for them, they used it for ungodly things! They used these things to worship their gods by instead of the true and living God!

Make no mistake about it, God planted Israel in good soil to produce good fruit, to bring Him glory, but instead they brought forth wild grapes, or fruit that was of no use.

So, yes, in the Scriptures Israel is pictured as the vine.

But now we come to the “**true vine**” Jesus Christ, and He alone is the ***TRUE VINE!***

In other words, Jesus is saying, “***I alone am the source of life, nourishment, fruitfulness and fulfillment!***”

The problem is that there are many other vines out there that people attach themselves to and the reason they do this is to be happy, to feel fulfilled. But unless you are attached to the true vine you will never find what you are looking for.

And these other vines can be all kinds of things like, money, prestige, education, sex, business success, religious affiliations and the list goes on. They are false vines or empty vines, only Jesus is the – ***TRUE VINE!*** Only Jesus is the source and the sustainer of eternal life and apart from Him, we can do nothing!

What that tells me is that we must be rooted and grounded in Him and not in Israel or some church, some denomination or anything else if we are going to bear fruit for God.

And the vinedresser is God the Father. They work together. You see, if a grape vine is going to produce abundant grapes, it must be pruned.

Back during the time of Jesus, a vinedresser would have two main duties.

Obviously one of the important tasks of the vinedresser is that he would have to cut off any branches that were not bearing fruit. The reason for this is that these branches would be sapping energy and it took away from the good branches the ability to produce abundant fruit. You would cut off these branches that were not producing fruit and the other branches would produce more fruit!

Also, there were these sucker shoots that would grow on a branch and did not produce fruit and they too would need to be cut off. If not, they would diminish its fruit bearing capacity.

And if you look at John chapter 15, verses 2 and 8, you will see that the Father wants us to bear fruit, to bear much fruit. Thus, pruning is necessary!

So look at how this is played out.

We are attached to the true vine; Jesus Christ and it is from Jesus that we get our life from.

And then there is the vinedresser, God the Father, who comes by, and He does the pruning in our life so that we can produce fruit. And, like I have said, He wants us to produce much fruit!

How many of you like the pruning process?

I am not sure any of us like the pruning process, but we do like the results of that process. But can you imagine if there was no pruning in our lives, we would be in trouble.

Think about that for a minute.

David said in Psalm 119:67, “**Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.**”

And in Psalm 119:71 David said, “**It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.**”

And that cleansing agent that God uses in our lives is the Word of God! It cuts to the heart and the handle to that knife is sometimes the things we go through in life. Make no mistake about it, pruning is needed in our lives. One writer summed it up like this. He wrote,

A character in C. S. Lewis’s Chronicles of Narnia series is named Eustace Scrub, a selfish, immature boy who thinks only of himself.

In The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, he not only finds himself in the dragon’s cave but discovers he has turned into a dragon!

He attempts to remove the scales but cannot do so by himself.

Finally, the Lion, the Christ-figure, comes. Eustace describes what happens next:

This is what the Lion said, but I don’t know if he spoke. “You will have to let me undress you.”

I was afraid of his claws I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate, so I just lay flat on my back and let him do it. The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right to my heart and when he began pulling the skin off it hurt worse than anything I had ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off.

That is how it is with pruning. We would rather do it ourselves, but we cannot, and even if we could, we would not remove what really has to go.

The truth is, what is noble and attractive to us has come from the cutting we would have avoided.

- R. Kent Hughes, John “That You May Believe”, p. 355

How true that is. We don’t like pruning, but it is necessary for our lives if we want to produce fruit.

And what we have seen here is – ***THE TRUE VINE – JESUS CHRIST!***

And – ***THE VINEDRESSER – GOD THE FATHER!***

As we read on, we will see – ***THE WORK OF THE VINEDRESSER!***

We have covered some of this, but we will dig in a little more as we read on because, besides the pruning the Father is doing other things in our life so that we can produce much fruit!

VERSE 2

As this verse opens up, we are told, “**Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away . . .**” John 15:2.

Now as some read this, they believe it is saying that you can lose your salvation, or it is a picture of a backslidden Christian because if you don’t bear fruit, you will be “**taken away.**”

First of all, I don’t think a Christian can lose their salvation because if their salvation was based on living up to a certain standard, then it would be a works salvation. Yes, they would need Jesus, but they would also need to not walk away.

I think John clears that up for us because there are those who look like Christians, talk like Christians, but are not Christians. And it is those that I believe walk away because they were never saved in the first place. In other words, tares amongst the wheat.

Listen to what John said in I John 2:19, **“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”**

The Living Bible puts this verse like this, **“These ‘against-Christ’ people used to be members of our churches, but they never really belonged with us or else they would have stayed. When they left us it proved that they were not of us at all.”**

I think that is clear, they were never really saved and thus, they did not lose their salvation or walk away from it.

So if this is not speaking of losing your salvation here in John 15:2, then what is Jesus saying?

First of all, Jesus says in verse 3, **“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”** So, if His men are clean, is Jesus saying that they can be unclean? I don’t think that is what Jesus is saying.

Let me explain what I mean and I think you will see that Jesus is not speaking of someone losing their salvation.

The Greek verb **“takes away”** or *AIRO* can also be translated ***“lifts up”*** which I think that is the intent here in verse 2.

Also, the Greek word for **“prunes”** or **“purge”** is *KATHARIZO* which can be translated ***“cleanse.”***

Now the picture that Jesus is painting they would understand, we might miss it because we don’t grow grapes.

But the idea here is that at times branches can become heavy and lay on the ground, not getting the sunshine that it needs to produce fruit. So, the vinedresser would come and lift it up and brace it.

Other times the fruit became so heavy it would lie on the ground and became dirty so once again he would come by and lift it up and wash it or cleanse it.

That is what verse 2 is all about and when you look at verse 3, it makes sense. You see, we are cleansed by the Word of God.

For those that are in Christ, God will lift you up and support you and He will cleanse you with His Word, with the whole idea of producing fruit in our lives!

Tenney puts it like this, *“The means by which pruning or cleaning is done is by the Word of God. It condemns sin; it inspires holiness; it promotes growth. As Jesus applied the words God gave him to the lives of the disciples, they underwent a pruning process that removed evil from them and conditioned them for further service.”*

So, this is not saying that you can lose your salvation, but it just shows how actively involved the Father is in our lives, lifting us up, pruning us so that we can produce abundant fruit in our lives and that fruit would honor Him!

That is – ***THE WORK OF THE VINEDRESSER!***

As we read on, we will be looking at two different branches. The first branch is – ***THE JESUS BRANCHES***. And then we will look at – ***THE JUDAS BRANCHES***.

These are two different branches on the vine, and one speaks of a true believer and the other speaks of a deceiver!

Let’s look at the first branch that Jesus speaks of, – ***THE JESUS BRANCHES!***

VERSES 3-5

Notice again how this section opens up. Jesus says, “**You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.**” John 15:3.

This is the same Greek word that is found in John 13:10, where Jesus said, “**... ‘He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.’**”

The idea is that you are saved or cleansed from sin, and we need that daily washing of our feet as they get dirty as we walk through this world. And that washing is done by the Word of God!

And when Jesus said “**... but not all of you.**” He was speaking of Judas, who was never saved, and we will deal with that more in a few minutes when we get to – ***THE JUDAS BRANCHES!***

You see, the Word of God is the cleansing agent, and it will correct us, inspire us to live holy lives, help us to grow, shows us how to have that victory and so on. (Ephesians 5:26)

And a true believer will abide in Christ, they will be attached to Christ, or they will not bear fruit!

Now let’s put this into a picture and I think it will help you understand the point that Jesus is making, that apart from Him we can do nothing!

Imagine taking an apple branch and cutting it from the tree. This branch has blossoms on it so it will produce fruit, it will produce apples, right?

And you bring it in your house, and you wait for the apples to come.

What is going to happen?

Nothing because the branch was removed from the rest of the tree and it could not receive any nourishment, any nutrients to help it to grow and produce fruit.

That is what Jesus is speaking of here when He says that we need to “**abide**” in Him. The Greek word for “**abide**” means to “*remain*” or to “*stay where you are.*”

Sin can break our fellowship with God. Rebellion can break our fellowship with God. If we don't listen to God we are not abiding in Him.

Boice put it like this, “When our Lord says: *Abide in me* he is talking about the will, about the choices, the decisions we make. We must decide to do things which expose ourselves to him and keep ourselves in contact with him. This is what it means to abide in him.”

And think about this for a minute. When we are attached to the vine the sap or the nutrients runs from the vine to the branches, and helps the branch to bear fruit. I see that sap or those nutrients as the Holy Spirit as the Godhead is actively involved in our lives as we abide in Christ!

Also understand that as you watch an apple tree it does not strive or struggle to produce fruit. There is no complaining or groaning as it is producing fruit.

But how often do we, as Christians, strive and struggle to produce fruit. And in the end, we are groaning and complaining about it. That is not how true fruit is produced.

What are we to do? Abide in Christ, stay close to Him and you will naturally produce fruit in your life!

Now I know that it says you can't do anything apart from Christ, and that is very true.

But there are those who will argue, “*What do you mean I can't do anything meaningful, fruitful outside of Christ? I can do whatever I want, and I have done good things no matter what you say!*”

In other words, some would protest to these words of Jesus.

As true as that may be outside of Christ, that you can do whatever you want, even good things, they will not be accepted by Him no matter how good they are outside of Him.

Thus, we are to abide in Christ or Christ should be at home in our lives. You see, a branch that is cut off from the vine will die, it won't produce fruit!

What is this fruit that Jesus is speaking of?

There are several examples of fruit spoken of in the Scriptures.

In Romans 1:13 Paul tells us that fruit is seeing people saved.

In Romans 6:22 Paul tells us that fruit is holiness.

In Romans 15:28 Paul speaks of our giving being fruit.

In Colossians 1:6-8 Paul speaks of fruit being the help we bring to others.

In Hebrews 13:15 we see that the praise of our lips is fruit.

And lastly, in Galatians 5:22 the fruit of the spirit is love!

What about joy, peace, longsuffering and-so-on? Notice that it is the fruit of the spirit not fruits.

These others are descriptions of love, what it produces in our lives, how that love is seen in our lives.

Thus, outside of Christ we can do nothing that He will accept as fruit unto Him!

Ray Stedman summed it up like this. He wrote,

This is what the Father is now laboring to produce in your life and in mine. If you truly belong to Jesus, he will begin to produce the fruit of the Spirit in your life. God has wondrous ways of bringing it about. He is not looking for our happiness, but our wholeness (what we used to call “holiness”), not busyness but beauty - beauty of life, beauty of character - not sadness but serenity. That is what he labors to produce.

- <https://bit.ly/3UoP9zX>

The problem for believers, for us, is that we carry around these bodies of flesh with us. And, as Paul said in Galatians, the flesh is at war with the Spirit and thus, there is a daily battle that goes on. And whatever you feed the most, whatever you surrender to, will be manifested in your life.

And for some believers, what you see in them, it is hard to believe they are Christians. Only God knows.

But for others, for non-believers, some of their actions make them look like believers. Again, only God knows.

It is the tares and the wheat and God will deal with that.

But what about those that are not abiding in Christ, that are not saved?

Jesus deals with that in John 15:6 in a section I call ***THE JUDAS BRANCHES!***

VERSE 6

Jesus is speaking of the unsaved who are not, of course, abiding in Christ.

Why do I feel that way?

Why did I say that in John 15:2 it was speaking of a believer and here an unbeliever?

Because in John 15:2 the key is that the branch was *IN* Christ and here, this *JUDAS BRANCH*, is not!

Also, that word “**cast out**” in the Greek is *BALLO* and it means “*to throw.*”

And notice the progression here.

Not abiding – cast out – withered – gathered – thrown into the fire – burned!

I think that is pretty clear, it speaks of judgment for those who reject Christ.

They don't abide in Christ, even though for a time it looked like they were Christians.

And let me make this point. True believers can backslide at times, but that is not what is being spoken of here!

You see, abiding doesn't make you a Christian or a true disciple of Christ, it just proves that you are one!

This is speaking of those who put on the disguise, you might say, of being a Christian but when things got tough, when things do not go the way that they wanted, they just go back to the world because that is where they are from! And the key is that they walked away and followed Jesus no longer!

Yes, they may look like Christians, but they are not. Remember what John said in I John 2:19, “**They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.**”

And please understand that this is not speaking of leaving a church. They had cut off their relationship with Christ, the One they said they loved but now they do not. They were never saved in the first place.

And keep in mind in those days there were not many churches, maybe just one in an area and thus, they at first were part of it. Maybe even served in it. But then, after a while, for whatever reason they left.

And the key here is **“that none of them were of us.”** They left the church and that was the evidence that they were not part of the body of Christ.

These people we might call ***THE JUDAS BRANCH!***

What does that mean?

It means that they were a professor of Jesus but not a possessor of Jesus!

How can I say that?

Because there is no abiding in Christ, they never knew Him, they had a form of righteousness but denied its power. They were religious but there was no relationship with Jesus!

Again, this is not speaking about backslidden Christians, but unbelievers!

Let me also say this because there are those who are not in agreement with what I have just said regarding this branch here in John 15:6 being a Judas branch or the unsaved.

Let me show you what I mean.

The first view believes ***cast out*** branches are ones who, though once true believers, end up in hell for lack of abiding and fruit. They were once disciples but are now ***cast out***.

As I have said, I don't believe you can lose your salvation. I don't think this is what Jesus was saying here.

Remember that Paul said in Philippians 1:6 that the work that God has begun in us, our salvation, He will complete. I don't think the Lord is going to mess up on any of us. He will complete the work that He has started!

The second view is that the *cast out* branches are ones who only appeared to be disciples, and who never really abided in Jesus, and therefore go to hell (like Judas). I do believe this is what Jesus was speaking of.

The third view sees the *cast out* branches as fruitless disciples who live wasted lives that are in effect burnt up, and this passage doesn't refer to their eternal destiny (like Lot, Abraham's nephew).

Again, when you are cast into the fire and burned up it is speaking of judgment, eternal judgment. So, this can't be right either.

The emphasis seems plain: there are no true disciples who do not abide. That is the evidence for our faith and what is produced is fruit!

The branch must remain connected to the vine, or it has no life and is of no lasting good.

So we have seen that – *THE JUDAS BRANCHES* is speaking of unbelievers, like Judas.

Keep in mind that the other disciples did not even know Judas was an unbeliever and a betrayer of Jesus. That is how it is sometimes, they play the part so well, but that is all it is, a role that they are playing, and in the end, they don't continue on!

Now let's look at what – *ABIDING IN HIM* means as we read on.

VERSES 7-10

Some read John 15:7 as an open-ended statement by Jesus. We just need to ask whatever we want, and we will get it. In fact, we have to because Jesus said so!

First of all, if you are abiding in Christ His will becomes your will. The more time we spend with the Lord the more we will think as He thinks. The more we dig into His Word the more we will understand His will for our lives. And the more our will is in line with His will the more we can be sure of having our prayers answered.

James makes this point of not getting what we ask for because we are asking amiss.

In James 4:2-3 we are told, “**... Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.**”

I have a feeling that not too many health, wealth and prosperity teachers use those verses much!

And the key for me is found in I John 5:14-15 where John tells us, “**Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.**”

You see, according to His will and not mine!

That is why I must abide in Him so I know what His will is for my life, what He wants me to do, what He wants me to pray for! It is an awesome statement by Jesus that if we ask what we desire it will be given to us.

Spurgeon put it like this, “*It becomes safe for God to say to the sanctified soul, ‘Ask what thou wilt, and it shall be done unto thee.’ The heavenly instincts of that man lead him right; the grace that is within his soul thrusts down all covetous lusting’s and foul desires, and his will is the actual shadow of God’s will. The spiritual life is master in him, and so his aspirations are holy, heavenly, Godlike.*” Exactly!

Now, what God has given to us, what is within our reach and yet, we do not use what God desires to give to us so often. Don't limit God because of your limits! God is far greater than that and thus, pray for God to do exceedingly abundantly above all you could ask or think!

And here in John 15:8 I believe flows out of what Jesus said in John 15:7. You see, the purpose of bearing fruit is not to glorify us, but the Father.

Jesus put it this way in Matthew 5:16, "**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**"

Thus, as we abide in Him, as fruit is produced in our lives, as prayer is being answered, we prove to be His disciples. Not by what we have done but by what He has done in us and through us! And others will see that we are true disciples of Jesus because we live for Him, and our actions reflect His nature!

Now let me share a few things regarding abiding in Christ.

Missionary pioneer J. Hudson Taylor of China was working and worrying so frantically that his health was about to break. Just when his friends feared he was near a breakdown, Taylor received a letter from fellow missionary John McCarthy that told of a discovery McCarthy made from John 15 – the joy of abiding in Christ.

McCarthy's letter said in part,

Abiding, not striving or struggling; looking off unto Him; trusting Him for present power . . . this is not new, and yet 'tis new to me . . . Christ literally all seems to me now the power, the only power for service; the only ground for unchanging joy.

As Hudson Taylor read this letter at his mission station in Chin-kiang on Saturday, September 4, 1869, his own eyes were opened. "*As I read,*" he recalled, "*I saw it all. I looked to Jesus, and when I saw, oh how the joy flowed!*"

Writing to his sister in England, he said,

As to work, mine was never so plentiful, so responsible, or so difficult; but the weight and strain are all gone. The last month or more has been perhaps the happiest of my life, and I long to tell you a little of what the Lord has done for my soul . . .

When the agony of soul was at its height, a sentence in a letter from dear McCarthy was used to remove the scales from my eyes, and the Spirit of God revealed the truth of our oneness with Jesus as I had never known it before.

McCarthy, who had been much exercised by the same sense of failure, but saw the light before I did, wrote (I quote from memory): “But how to get faith strengthened? Not by striving after faith but by resting on the faithful one.”

As I read, I saw it all! . . . As I thought of the vine and the branches, what light the blessed spirit poured into my soul!

- Robert J. Morgan, Nelson’s Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations & Quotes, p. 1

Abiding is not striving, it is walking, it is living, it is trusting in the ***GREAT I AM!***

Paul, in Galatians 2:20 wrote, “**I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.**”

We live and walk by faith!

In Colossians 2:6 Paul wrote, “**As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord [by faith for salvation], so walk in Him [by faith for daily fellowship] . . .**”

We are to rest in the Lord, spend time with the Lord, and follow the Lord as He is leading us!

Jesus tells us that we are to abide in His love in John 15:9.

Now let me ask you this. What is the fruit of the Spirit?

The fruit of the Spirit is **LOVE!**

And how do we abide in the love of God?

Jesus tells us by keeping His commandments!

What does He mean by that? Is He talking about a works salvation here?

Not at all. As we abide in Christ, we will know His love for us and that love that He has for us will be manifested in our lives. That is what He is talking about. Abiding in Him!

You see, Jesus deliberately loved His disciples according to the way God the Father *loved* Him.

We know that Jesus *loved* His disciples by teaching them, protecting them, guiding them, sacrificially serving them, and using His power and authority to do these things.

In some way, the Father also did all those things for Jesus and Jesus did them for the disciples after that pattern. And He loves us like that as well!

Spurgeon puts this into perspective for us as he wrote, *“Beloved, you do not, dare not, could not, doubt the love of the Father to his Son. It is one of those unquestionable truths about which you never dreamed of holding an argument. Our Lord would have us place his love to us in the same category with the Father’s love to himself. We are to be as confident of the one as of the other.”*

Remember, the fruit of the Spirit is **LOVE!** And John gives us some insight into this love by telling us in I John 4:10-11, **“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”**

For the life of me I can't understand how Christians can have bitterness, anger, hatred towards other Christians.

Yes, they might not be your closest friends, but bitterness, anger, hatred is not a fruit of the Spirit, but it is a works of the flesh!

Imagine if God responded like we do. Think about it. We do something wrong; we dishonor God and now He is angry at us, bitter towards us, He hates us?

No way, not at all. He loves us and we are to love others. Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is found in Jesus! (Romans 8)

John once again tells us about this love in I John 3:16-19 when he wrote, **“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.”**

If you are confused about this love that Jesus is speaking of, the cost of this love, John tells us, **“He laid down His life for us.”**

We can talk about love, but John makes it more personal, he tells us to show how much you love people by what you do and not only by what you say!

Remember the words of Jesus in John 13:34-35, **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

The evidence for being a disciple of Jesus Christ is your love for one another! It is not your Bible knowledge, which is important, but the reality is, it is that Bible knowledge that is manifested in your life, the love you show people.

If you are angry, yelling at people, harsh towards them, why?

Is God that way towards you? Absolutely not! Then don't be that way towards others. We know love because He laid down His life for us. May we do the same for others!

Now, once again, how do we abide in God's love? By being obedient to His Word, that is how we abide in God's love.

Now what happens as we do?

I love this and maybe that is why so many people are struggling, because they are not abiding in Christ, and they are not obedient to what He is saying, and it is manifested in their lives.

Let's read on and you will see what I mean as we look at – ***THE RESULTS OF ABIDING!***

VERSE 11

As I have said, some will use John chapter 15 to speak of a believer losing his salvation, but, as I have shown you, I don't believe that is what is spoken of.

And think about it. Jesus did not say that His purpose was that your "***doubts may be full***" but that "***your joy may be full.***" In other words, our joy should be overflowing!

Now keep in mind that the *joy* of Jesus isn't the same as what is commonly understood as *happiness* or *excitement*. The joy of Jesus is not the pleasure of a life of ease; it is the exhilaration of being right with God, and consciously walking in His love and care. We can have that *joy* – we can have *His joy* – and have it as an abiding presence.

You see, we have a fullness of joy in our lives! But those who don't abide in God's love by being obedient to His Word lose that fullness of joy that God has for them.

Carson put it this way when he wrote, *“No one is more miserable than the Christian who for a time hedges in his obedience. He does not love sin enough to enjoy its pleasures, and does not love Christ enough to relish holiness. He perceives that his rebellion is iniquitous, but obedience seems distasteful. He does not feel at home any longer in the world, but his memory of his past associations and the tantalizing lyrics of his old music prevent him from singing with the saints. He is a man most to be pitied; and he cannot forever remain ambivalent.”*

We don't have to be miserable Christians; we can be full of joy by abiding in Christ!

And that joy you have in your life is a witness to others of what they can have in Christ. I am not saying an absence of problems but a joy that is overflowing because of God's love!

Never forget that. Don't be a Sally sourpuss but be filled with the joy of the Lord!

He is the vine; we are the branches, and we need to stay attached to Him so that we can produce much fruit in our lives.

Let me close with this for you to think about.

Think about trees that tower up into the sky. These trees send their roots down into the earth so they can draw up the water and minerals so that they can produce leaves, produce fruit!

The most important part of the tree is the part that you cannot see.

And think about it. The most important part of a Christian's life is the part that only God sees. It is our faith in Him, abiding in Him, drawing out the nutrients we need so we can live out our Christian faith and produce fruit.

And as we do, it doesn't matter how difficult the pressures of life are, we will stand strong in the Lord, we will not fail because our roots are deep in Him!

Remember what Jesus said in John 15:5, "**I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**"