

The Gospel of John

Chapter 15:1-10

September 28, 1997

- **The Gospel of John Outline:**

- - Chapter 1 Our Lord is the Word, the Light and the Life
 - Chapter 2 The Lord of the Wedding Feast; Zeal for the purity of the temple
 - Chapter 3 Spiritual Birth, Belief and Salvation vs. Unbelief and Condemnation
 - Chapter 4 The Ministry in Samaria, The Harvest, The Faith of the Nobleman
 - Chapter 5 Paralytic man healed on the Sabbath, Unity of The Father and Son
 - Chapter 6 The Bread of Life
 - Chapter 7 The public debates about Jesus during the Feast of Tabernacles
 - Chapter 8 Public debates: Woman caught in adultery; The Son makes you free; Abraham's true children
 - Chapter 9 Jesus heals a man born blind.
 - Chapter 10 Jesus is the Door and the True Shepherd
 - Chapter 11 Our Lord is the Resurrection and the Life
 - Chapter 12 Jesus Anointed and Worshipped as King, God softens some and hardens some, Public ministry ends
 - Chapter 13 Jesus Loves His Disciples, Judas Betrays The Master
 - Chapter 14 The Way, The Truth and The Life
 - Chapter 15 Jesus is the True Vine

- **Review and Introduction**

In the last chapter, Jesus concluded the final instructions given to the disciples in the upper room, He has them arise and they go out. It appears that this instruction in chapter 15 is given by Jesus on the way to the garden. It is rather fascinating to see the types of things that Jesus gives them in His final words. He doesn't tell them how to deal with politicians, nor does He give them lessons on casting out spirits or healing the lame. Instead He has been teaching them to love each other, and here we will see His instruction to them to abide in Him. These two principles are apparently central to Christ, loving each other and faithfulness.

In this section, Jesus uses a parable to explain our relationship with Him and the Father. When we are examining this parable, it is important that we remember that, as with all parables, we ought not to examine every property of the vine, but only to take a general view of the object to which Christ applies the comparison. It is too easy for us to go beyond the text in this case and start to make application or doctrine that isn't true.

Exposition of John 15:1-10

- ● *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*

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- It would not be hard to imagine that while the men were walking through the streets that Jesus points to a vine or a vineyard to stage this instruction. Notice here that He begins by stating that He is the *true* vine. There are those who will claim that they are worthy of our worship and loyalty but here Jesus states that it is He alone in whom we must abide.
- The Father is the vinedresser. This gives us wonderful insight into the various roles played by the three persons of our triune God. The Son is the basis upon which the Elect grow and the Father is the one who sanctifies them. Those whom He does not sanctify are the fruitless branches. These are false branches and the Father removes them altogether without trying to make them fruitful. However, those that do bear true fruit are the true branches and the true branches are those that are part of the true vine. These He prunes so that they may bear more fruit. Our Father in heaven makes it His business to see us grow in our sanctification and maturity.
- Careful attention should be paid to the fact here that the normative pattern for those who abide in Christ and who are tended to by the heavenly husbandman (the Father) is of ever increasing fruitfulness. Christian maturity is not measured by sinning less and less. Rather it is evidenced by becoming more and more fruitful in our lives because the Father is

causing us to mature. This gives us further insight into Paul's comment about being "...created in Christ Jesus for good works..." Eph. 2:10

- ● ³ *"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*

- Despite their failure to comprehend that which Christ is teaching, Jesus assures them that they are truly rooted in the true vine and they are being pruned by the Father. Even though they did not yet have the Spirit, Jesus knew that the disciples would be both faithful to abide and would be fruitful because He knew that they had been given to Him by the Father.

- ● ⁴ *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*

- The concept of abiding in the vine is one of perseverance or continuing to the end. The christian life is then characterized by lifelong growth and ever increasing fruitfulness. It is not true that we have periods where we were exceptional in our spirituality. Rather we should see that if we are in Christ, we bear fruit. If we are not in Christ, we do not. This is not to say that we come and go in our relationship with Christ. But we can with confidence know that if we are truly in Christ and we are not fruitful in our lives then we are in sin and confession and repentance is warranted.

- ● 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.⁶ "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.*

- If we consider those who will come to our Lord and declare to Him that they have done mighty works in His name (Matthew 7:21-22) we can see that if the fruit we bear is not fruit from the true vine, then it is not acceptable to the Father. All of the acts of kindness, compassion and charity are simply "filthy rags" if they are not done by abiding in Christ. The first thing that must happen is that we are reconciled to God through Christ. Only then may we bear fruit in a manner which is pleasing to the Father.
- Those who do not abide in Christ are cut out and burned. This verse has frequently troubled the church. What is the status of these branches? Were they saved and now they are not? It is crucial for us to interpret scripture in light of scripture. These are branches which appear to be properly connected to Christ. But notice that they are withered; they are unfruitful. Either the Arminian position is correct and these are people who were saved and now are not or these are people who never were true branches but had the appearance of being connected properly. Even if we only examined this book, we have chapter after chapter of verses which declare Jesus promises that those whom the Father has given to Him will be raised up on the last day and none will be lost.
- It is possible to be numbered with those who are truly saved and yet not be saved. It is possible for someone to participate in the fellowship of the Saints, partake in the sacrament of baptism, partake in the Lord's supper, attend all of the church socials and perform mighty works and yet be unsaved. We might even see someone's life get cleaned up yet they fall away. But it is crucial that we realize that the works are not the primary measure of a true believer but rather the mark is those who abide in Christ. Those who persevere are those who are truly part of Christ. Those who have made a profession of Christ but do not bear fruit are under a worse condemnation than if they had never made the profession. This is true because it is possible to be under the covenant of Christ and not be of the Elect. It would be better for someone to not be in the covenant of Christ than to be in it and unfruitful. (1 Peter 2:21)

- ● ⁷ *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.⁸ "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*

- Having already declared the assurance of their salvation, Christ still commands them to abide in Him. As they do so, they will be fruitful, the Father will grant them that which they pray for and the Father will be glorified.

- ● ⁹ *"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.¹⁰ "If you keep My commandments, you will*

abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. NKJV

- - Christ gives us now a specific aspect of Himself which we should abide in. We are to abide or continue in the same kind of love that He demonstrated. The things that Christ has commanded us to do are to love our Lord and our neighbors and by this we will be keeping His commandments. The pattern of faithfulness that we are to imitate is that of Christ. Christ set His mind on the glory that awaited Him on the other side of the cross and endured the shame of His crucifixion because this is what the Father wanted Him to do. So then should we if that is what will bring glory to the Father.
 - There are three primary points to remember from this portion of the scriptures:

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1. We have no power of doing good but what comes from the Father;
2. If we are truly rooted in Christ, we are pruned and dressed by the Father for ever increasing fruitfulness;
3. The Father removes the unfruitful branches so that they may be thrown into the fire.