



John 15:1-8, Lesson #43

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Rewind: John 14...The Teacher is leaving...and reminds His Disciples about the Life He has Promised Them.

A good teacher always promotes and appeals for the disciples (students) to be a part of the solution, not the problem. The teacher desires for his students to participate and not just listen or watch what is going on. He/She can do that by stimulating their minds and encouraging them to become doers and not a hearers only ("participating" in lieu of "sitting on the sidelines"). Eventually the mind stirs the desire in a student/disciple to get up and tell what they know because they have seen and heard. Once the Holy Spirit became evident in their lives, they became pro-active and then...joyfully spread the word about Jesus.

In today's world, we might use the example of God multiplying his disciples through the technology available to us (television, twitter, Facebook, X communication, YouTube, etc.). In Jesus' world where He walked with His disciples, he used parables and those things that were evident in the world around them to teach them.

In the last part of our lesson today (First part of John 15), we see Jesus using terms the disciples were very familiar with.

John 15:1-3 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 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. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."

- God repeatedly used a **vine** as a symbol of His people in the Hebrew Scriptures Psalm 80:8-9.
- Jesus is **the true vine**. We must be rooted in Him if we are going to bear fruit for God.
- The **vine** and **branch** picture emphasizes complete dependence and the need for constant connection.
- The New Covenant believer has relationship with both the **Father** (vinedresser) and the Son (vine).
- The branches that are taken away were never properly abiding in the vine, demonstrated by the fact that they did **not bear fruit**.
- The vinedresser prunes (cleans up) the fruit-bearing vine so it will bear more fruit. *"Left to itself a vine will produce a good deal of unproductive growth. For maximum fruitfulness extensive pruning is essential."* (Morris)
- The word of God is a cleansing agent. It condemns sin, it inspires holiness, it promotes growth, and it reveals power for victory. Jesus continues to wash His people through the word (Ephesians 5:26).

John 15:4-8 "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. 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. 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 you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

- Jesus emphasized a *mutual* relationship. It isn't only that the disciple abides in the Master; the Master also abides in the disciple.
- Jesus used this picture to assure His disciples of continued connection and relationship even though He was about to depart from them.

NOTE: Yet He spoke this in a way that also indicated an aspect of **choice** on their part. Abiding was something they must **choose**. When Jesus says: **Abide in me** he is talking about the will, about the choices, the decisions we make.

- **He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit:** Fruit bearing is inevitable with abiding. The quality and quantity of the fruit may differ, but the presence of fruit will be inevitable.
- **Without Me you can do nothing:** We can **do nothing** of real, eternal value without Jesus.
- **If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered:**
 - ✓ Jesus warned His disciples that failing to abide means that life fails.
 - ✓ A disciple only spiritually lives as they are connected to the Master.
 - ✓ These verbs describe a progression for the one who doesn't abide (cast out, withered, gathered, thrown, and burned). The progression described is a sober and significant warning of the danger of not abiding.

Note: The phrasing Jesus used here was important. He didn't say, *If anyone does not bear fruit he is cast out*. He said, **if anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out**. He knows who abides and who does not, and this can't be perfectly discerned by our outward estimation of fruit.

- This faithful abiding disciple should expect answered prayer as part of their relationship with Jesus. A failure to see prayer answered means something is not right in the disciple's relationship. It could be in the abiding and could be in the asking.
- **By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit:** The purpose of fruit bearing is to bring glory to God, not to the disciple. A branch that bears **much fruit** brings honor to one who cares for the vine, and a disciple who bears **much fruit** in a spiritual sense brings honor to God.

Fruit bearing is something we must decide for ourselves. Our hearts have to be in tune and in time with the song. Being in harmony with Jesus, we find it pleasing to sing, sing, sing.

 There's within my heart a melody...Jesus whispers sweet and low,
 "Fear not, I am with thee, peace, be still," in all of life's ebb and flow.
 Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Sweetest Name I know,
 Fills my every longing...Keeps me singing as I go. 