

April 23rd, 2017  
 APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO  
 NOTHING  
 John 15:1-11

At the end of chapter fourteen, we hear Jesus say “I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here” (John 14:31) This marks a transition in Jesus’ farewell address. In chapter fourteen Jesus addressed the disciple’s *troubled hearts*. They were troubled because Jesus told them He going away to the Father (**John 13:33**) But now in chapter fifteen, Jesus is going to address their *tempted hearts*. Jesus addresses three difficult temptations that all disciples will face. You can see it very clearly in the text.

First in v.1-11, we will face the temptation of reverting to self-reliance. We can begin to feel less and less needy for Christ. Therefore He emphatically reminds us in v.5 “apart from me you can do nothing.” Secondly, in v.12-17, we will face the temptation of not loving one another. Love begins to grow cold as adversity heats up, and therefore He says in v.17 “These things I command you, so that you will love one another.” Finally in v.18-27, we will face the temptation of buckling under the world’s hatred and abandoning the cause. Therefore Jesus prepares us to be scorned and despised by the world. v.18 “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.”

Three major temptations that Jesus addresses in this chapter. 1) Self-reliance; 2) Love-less hearts; and 3) Fear of the world. And Jesus gives us the ultimate weapon against these temptations, namely our union with Him. Ten times (the overwhelming emphasis in our text) Jesus says “Abide in me.”<sup>1</sup> Abide—μένω menō—in the Greek “describes something that remains where it is, continues in a fixed state, or endures.”<sup>2</sup> If you abide in Jesus, your self-reliance

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<sup>1</sup> v. 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10

<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: John 12-21*, (Chicago, IL.,: Moody Publishers, 2008), pg. 142

will be defeated, your love for others will increase, and you will endure the world's hatred.<sup>3</sup> Union with Christ is what will defeat the temptations and trials and tribulations that we face in this life. And nothing else will.

Hudson Taylor, the founder of China Inland Mission hung his life on John 15:1-11. Taylor was the human being most responsible for organizing the missionary movement that brought hundreds of missionaries to China for the first time in the 19th century. Can you imagine the demonic attacks, and persecution, and hardships that Taylor faced? You don't bring a gospel revolution to a country expecting to enter Mr. Rogers neighborhood. No. The only way a gospel revolution begins is when you are willing to storm the gates of hell. So what sustained Taylor? In 1932, his son Fredrick wrote about Taylor

“Here was a man almost sixty years of age, bearing tremendous burdens, yet absolutely calm and untroubled. Oh, the pile of letters! any one of which might contain news of death, of lack of funds, of riots or serious trouble. Yet all were opened, read and answered with the same tranquility —Christ his reason for peace, his power for calm. Dwelling in Christ, he drew upon His very being and resources...And this he did by an attitude of faith as simple as it was continuous. Yet he was delightfully free and natural. I can find no words to describe it save the Scriptural expression “in God.” He was in God all the time and God was in him. It was the true “abiding” of John fifteen.”<sup>4</sup>

Taylor was sustained through every temptation by abiding in Christ. And this abiding bore much fruit. That's what Jesus is aiming at in our passage this morning—that we abide in Him all the way to the end. Because there will be some disciples who will not make it. Some branches will be taken away by the Father, and thrown into the fire and burned (v.2, 6). Will you endure to the end? Will you abide in Christ and bear much fruit? And if so, how? How will you abide in Christ?

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<sup>3</sup> If you don't abide in Christ, if you don't bear fruit, you will be gathered and thrown into the fire and burned (v.6).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/glorifying-god-by-bearing-fruit-in-union-with-christ>

- ☆ The Vine and the Vinedresser
- ☆ The Burning of Fruitless Branches
- ☆ The Blessing of Abiding Branches

### *The Big Idea...*

Apart from Christ you can do nothing, therefore abide in Him

## I. The Vine and the Vine Dresser

### The Vine

So Jesus begins in v.1 with his last “I AM” statement in John’s gospel. “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.” Metaphors in Scripture are never meant to be pressed beyond their intended meaning, otherwise you will arrive at absurd interpretations. When Jesus says “I am the *true* vine” He is pointing to the relationship that He bears to *us*. The relationship becomes crystal clear in v.5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. ” So the question is, how do vines and their branches relate to each other? Jesus tells us in our text. Two main ways. **Branches receive all of their power to live from the vine, and branches receive all of their sap nourishing satisfaction from the vine.** Power and satisfaction.

First you receive all our *power* from the vine. v.5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, *for apart from me you can do nothing.*” If you wake up tomorrow morning as a Christian it is because Jesus is giving you the power to remain. You are not autonomous. You are not in control. You are not ultimately decisive in how you will end this life. Apart from Christ you cannot do anything. The reason Judas

betrayed and the other 11 didn't is because Jesus gave them the power to persevere. If the vine doesn't hang on to you, you will not hang on to Him.<sup>5</sup>

Secondly you receive all your soul nourishing *satisfaction* from the vine. v.11 "These things I have spoken to you, *that my joy may be in you*, and that your joy may be full." How will your joy be full? Only if Jesus' own joy is in you. You will have no joy apart from the vine. No amount of worldly riches or reputation or relationships or position will ever fill the infinite vacuum of your soul. If the vine doesn't satisfy you, nothing ever will.

That's what I believe Jesus is mainly saying when He says "I am the vine; you are the branches." 'I will provide you will all the power that you will ever need *for apart from me you can do nothing*. And I will infinitely satisfy your soul *for my joy will be in you so that your joy may be full*. Life sustaining power and soul satisfying joy.

### The Vinedresser

But it's easy to miss the important role that the Father plays. And if we miss it we will find ourselves completely bewildered when trials comes. Why do trials come? Because the Father is the vinedresser. γεωργός *geōrgos* in Greek, meaning—husbandman, farmer, cultivator of the soil. The Father controls absolutely everything in the vineyard. And the vineyard is His universe. Your pain, your heartache, your troubled spirit is not the result of His vineyard being out of control. It is the result of the Father pruning you. Pruning is painful. It often looks more like mutilation than mercy. More like torture than tenderness. Cutting, carving, chopping up your life. Hebrews points to the pain of this pruning in **Hebrews 12:6**

"For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives...[v.10-11] he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline *seems painful* rather than

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<sup>5</sup> "Hence it follows, that the nature of man is unfruitful and destitute of everything good; because no man has the nature of a vine, till he be implanted in him." John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Vol. XVIII*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 107

pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful *fruit* of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

This is important for the disciples to hear, because they were facing defection from within — Judas, and soon they would be facing persecution from without — the world. But the Father is in control of both. The Father’s discipline in Hebrews 12 came in the form of human persecution. **Hebrews 12:4** “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.” And then v.5 quickly follows “do not regard lightly the discipline (the pruning) of the Lord.” All persecution is the Father’s disciplining us. All persecution is the Father’s pruning us. Father does this so that we would bear more fruit. Look at the end of v.2 “every branch that does bear fruit *he prunes*, **that** it may bear more fruit.”

### **The power of the Vine and the providence of the Vinedresser**

So let’s summarize the importance of v.1. Jesus is the vine and the Father is the vinedresser, meaning Jesus supplies our *power*, the Father our *providences*. Jesus is our *satisfaction*; the Father is *sovereign*. Jesus provides everything we need for internal strength, and the Father is in control of all of our external circumstances. Therefore the connection is immediate. When your life feels out of control, or when you are being attacked by others, or when you are struggling against that besetting sin, the Father is pruning you. All pain is pruning. He’s cutting away your ability to rely on yourself, and is forcing you to rely on Christ. Paul says in **2 Corinthians 1:8-9** “For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.” Paul says this suffering was “to *make* us.” He recognized there was a *Maker* of this suffering. The Father *made* Paul feel pain, in order to *make* him rely not on himself but on Christ. Your pain has a purpose. Your pain keeps you in Christ. Your pain produces the fruit of abiding.

## II. The Burning of Fruitless Branches

### The problem of being “in Christ”<sup>6</sup>

When I first came to the doctrines of grace, it was this passage and Romans 11 that challenged me the most regarding our security in Christ. We simply cannot take Jesus’ words lightly if we are going to be faithful to what He is saying. Look at v.2 “Every branch *in me* that does not bear fruit he takes away.” The Father takes away fruitless branches. What does He do with them? Look at v.6 “If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.” In other words, fruitless branches are thrown into hell. And Jesus amplifies our discomfort by saying those two little words in v.2 “*in me*”: “Every branch *in me* that does not bear fruit he takes away.” Which seems to suggest that it is possible to be in Christ, and then cast into hell. If Jesus were to simply omit the “*in me*” here, it would be easier to understand. But He doesn’t omit

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<sup>6</sup> For an excellent breakdown of the different types of false believing, see Wilhemus A Brakel’s *The Christian’s Reasonable Service, Vol. 2: The Church and Salvation*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Reformation Heritage Books, 1993), pg. 263ff

them. Is that what Jesus is saying? Can true believers who have been born again, and justified before God, lose their salvation?<sup>7</sup>

### **True believers cannot be lost**

No that is not what Jesus is saying. The gospel is not good news if believers can be lost. And Jesus has been very clear on this throughout this gospel.

**John 6:37** “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”

**John 10:27-29** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

**John 17:12** “I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost”

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<sup>7</sup> Before we answer, let's look at Paul's parallel passage in Romans 11 to see that this is not isolated to John 15. In Romans 11, Paul is explaining God's purposes for unbelieving Israel. They were part of the *visible* people of God, that is, they were branches, and yet many of them were being broken off from the vine. And so Paul says that they, as branches, were being broken off. Starting in v.17

“But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, [18] do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. [19] Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” [20] That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. [21] For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. [22] Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.”

Hopefully you can see the dilemma I faced when I first embraced Calvinism. These verses *appear* to teach that you can lose your salvation. One moment you are a branch attached to the vine, and the next moment (regardless of the cause) you can be broken off. Is this possible? Is this what Jesus is saying in John 15? Can true believers be lost?

## Not all believers are believers

So then how do we make sense of Jesus' words? By realizing that not all believers are true believers.<sup>8</sup> There are many who have an outward attachment to Jesus Christ only, who can say many right things, and yet not truly belong to Christ.<sup>9</sup> Three examples from the gospel of John.<sup>10</sup>

First, in John 6, we read of many thousands of *disciples* who were following Jesus. They were baptized, they witnessed his miracles, but when they finally heard what he was really saying. They abandoned him. **John 6:66** "After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him."

Secondly, in John 8, we read of many Jews who came to believe in Christ. Jesus told them in **John 8:31** "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They were offended at the thought that they were not free on their own terms and began accusing him of having a devil (v.48).

Thirdly, and most important to our context is Judas. He had a confession of faith. He belonged to the most exclusive club on earth—Jesus' twelve disciples. And yet Jesus says **John 6:70** "Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." Judas was not saved and then lost his salvation, for just a few verses earlier, John records in John 6:64 "Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him." In other words, Judas was a false branch. He was "in Jesus" but he was not really in Jesus.

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<sup>8</sup> Just as Paul says in **Romans 9:6** "...not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel," so Jesus has been teaching us throughout John that not all believers are truly believers. (John 2:23; 6:66; 6:70) Also see Matthew 13:20-22; 1 John 2:19; 2 Peter 2:20-21; Galatians 5:4

<sup>9</sup> The gospels are full of this imagery: tares *among* the wheat (Matthew 13:25-30); bad fish *among* the good (Matthew 13:48); goats among the sheep (Matthew 25:33, 41); foolish virgins *among* the wise (Matthew 25:1-12). John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: John 12-21*, (Chicago, IL.; Moody Publishers, 2008), pg. 152

<sup>10</sup> Also see John 2:23

### The necessity of fruit bearing

There is a necessary condition for abiding in Christ. You must be a branch that bears fruit. You must be a branch that abides in Christ. “There is no such thing as a fruitless Christian.”<sup>11</sup> Feel the weight of v.2 “Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he [the Father] takes away” and v.6 “If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.” Jesus pulls no punches in this passage. Your everlasting state rests on whether you will abide in Christ and bear fruit.<sup>12</sup> **Matthew 15:13** “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up.” **Matthew 3:10** “Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” That’s what Jesus is saying.

## III. The Blessing of Abiding Branches

### Already you are clean?

When I hear things like this, it makes me question what I think I know about the gospel. There have been books written on v.2 that show that you can lose your salvation if you fail to do your part.<sup>13</sup> After all, the only command in this passage is to abide. v.4 “*Abide in me*, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.” And then again in v.9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. *Abide in my love.*” So my heart starts to beat and it asks “What fruit must I bear? How do I abide?”

If we skip v.3 we will answer that question wrong. Look at v.3 “Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.” Where did that

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<sup>11</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: John 12-21*, (Chicago, IL.,: Moody Publishers, 2008), pg. 148

<sup>12</sup> cf. Matthew 7:17-20; Luke 6:43; Matthew 21:33-43

<sup>13</sup> Robert Shank’s *Life in the Son*

come from? First Jesus was talking about vines and branches and now he's talking about being clean. This is totally confusing! Or is it? In the Greek it is really clear what Jesus is saying, but I think we can see it in the English if we take some time and ponder it. Let's put the end of v.2 together with v.3. Jesus says "...every branch that does bear fruit he [the Father] prunes, that it may bear more fruit. *Already* you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you." Two clues here. First is the word *already*. We use the word *already* to show that something has been completed before something else happens.<sup>14</sup> For example: "I was *already* full before they served the main course." That is our first clue. Something has *already* been accomplished in v.3, before the warning in v.2 and the command in v.4.

Our second clue is the relationship between pruning and cleaning. Both involve a removing of something. Cleaning removes dirt. Pruning removes rapidly growing shoots and suckers from the plant. In essence, pruning is cleaning up the plant. So what is Jesus saying? He's saying "...every branch that does bear fruit [the Father cleans] that it may bear more fruit. [v.3] *Already* you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you." In other words, Jesus is saying 'You must be continually cleaned by my Father, but you are already clean.'

The Greek makes this very clear. v.2 "the Father καθαίρω *kathairō* prunes" v.3 "Already you are καθαρός *katharos* clean." They come from the same word. 'The Father must prune you if you are to belong to Me, but you have already been pruned through my word.'

### **The parallel in John 13**

If you doubt for a moment this is what Jesus is saying, then consider the parallel to this verse in John 13. Jesus begins to wash the disciples' feet. He comes to Peter but "Peter said to him, 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter

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<sup>14</sup> <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/grammar/british-grammar/adverbs-of-time-and-frequency/already>

said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” Jesus said to him, “*The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean.*” (John 13:8-10)

### **We are already clean because of His word!**

That’s why v.3 is so precious here. True believers have already been cleaned and pruned by Jesus’ word. That’s how v.3 ends “Already you are clean *because of the word that I have spoken to you.*” What word? The word of the Gospel. That Jesus Christ is the Son of God—God Himself, who put on flesh, and lived a sinless life, only to lay down His life for the sins of His sheep, and rise again victorious over death and hell three days later.<sup>15</sup> Anyone who truly believes that word is clean already. Meaning they have already had the ultimate pruning. You can hear the connection between the power of His word and our ultimate cleaning in **John 5:24** “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever *hears my word* and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” That’s the precious reality of v.3. True believers, not false ones like Judas, are already clean! Your sins have been totally removed and you will never come into condemnation. Ever. You are clean. Your sins have not only been washed away by His death on the cross, but by His resurrection you have been given the very righteousness of Christ. You can’t possibly get any cleaner. You have the perfect obedience of Christ written next to your name. And Jesus says “Already you are clean *because of the word that I have spoken to you.*”<sup>16</sup>

### **Therefore continue to abide in the pruning**

It’s that context in which the command to abide in v.4 exists. ‘Because you have already been made clean then abide or rest in that reality. Become what you already are and bear more fruit.’ God-willing, we are going to see next time more clearly what this fruit is. What I want you to see now is that the fruit

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<sup>15</sup> John 1:1, 14; 8:46; 10:17-18

<sup>16</sup> cf. 1 Corinthians 5:7

is guaranteed for true believers. Look ahead to v.16 “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide,” That is what the Vinedresser does. He continues to prune us so that we will not fail in producing fruit.

If objects at this point and says ‘I don’t need to produce fruit, I don’t need to continue to be cleansed because I am already cleansed’ is arguing against what Jesus says. It’s the same argument that Peter initially put up against Jesus in John 13:8 “You shall never wash my feet.” Peter “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” Believers who refuse to be pruned by the Father are proving not to be true believers. v.8 says “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and *so prove* to be my disciples.” Bearing fruit doesn’t save you, but it does prove that you are a disciple. It proves that you are connected to the vine. It proves that the Vinedresser is working in your life.

## Application

### Our Doctrine: Free Grace is the Fuel for Fruit Bearing

There are only two types of branches in the church: branches that bear fruit who enter into the joy of their master, and branches who don’t bear fruit and will be finally cut off and throw into the fire. How will you be like the eleven disciples who ultimately persevered as opposed to Judas who is forever condemned? How will you bear fruit and so prove to be Jesus’ disciples?

By resting completely and utterly in the Vine. Embrace your helplessness. v.5 “Apart from me you can do nothing.” This is the both the most difficult thing to believe in this passage and the most delightful thing in this passage.

It is the most difficult thing to believe because it teaches us that even our best obedience needs cleansing.<sup>17</sup> You are so deeply flawed that even that good things you do, you should be ashamed of. That’s what Scripture says: “All our

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<sup>17</sup> John Piper, *A Camaraderie of Confidence: The Fruit of Unfailing Faith in the Lives of Charles Spurgeon, George Muller, and Hudson Taylor*, (Wheaton, IL,,: Crossway, 2016), pg. 100

righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.” (Isaiah 64:6). This is difficult because you have to admit that you so deeply flawed and so profoundly weak and so pervasively corrupt that you have utterly disqualified yourself from any favor from God. Your best efforts will never please God. Ever. “Apart from me you can do nothing.”

But it’s also the most delightful thing to hear in this passage, because Jesus says “Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.” If you truly believe what Christ has done for you in the gospel, you will be the freest most fruit bearing person on earth. “Grace” as one author says “will allow you to hear the hardest things about your flaws and patterns of sin because you will know that by grace there is no flaw or sin that you will unearth that can ever decimate your life. You cannot be more loved and accepted than you are by the Lord who loved you will the full knowledge of what you have done, are doing, and will do; you will have unshakeable confidence that nothing can reduce his love for you. Therefore you are free to admit your desperation.”<sup>18</sup> So how do you bear much fruit? By admitting to that you can’t. ‘Jesus I can’t do this without you.’ How do you bear much fruit? By admitting to Jesus that all your fruit will have corruption in it. ‘Jesus I corrupt everything I touch.’ And then believing that no matter how much you sin, you are accepted anyway. “Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.” When we rely totally on Jesus’ work, we have all the grace we need for our work.

That’s our **doctrine**: Free Grace is the Fuel for Fruit Bearing, therefore...

**Our Duty**: We must abide in Christ not strive in Christ

There’s a way to abide in Christ that is full of the flesh. And a way to abide that is full of faith. Hudson Taylor’s saw and understood this deeply. The vine of Jesus Christ spread to China because Taylor discovered the secret of abiding in Christ. This is what He said:

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<sup>18</sup> R.W. Glenn, *Crucifying Morality: The Gospel of the Beatitudes*, (Wapwallopen, PA.: Shepherd Press, 2013), pg. 31

“To let my loving Savior work in me His will, my sanctification, is what I would live for by His grace. Abiding, not striving nor struggling, looking off unto Him; trusting Him for present power, resting in the love of an almighty Savior. From the consciousness of [our union with the vine—with Christ] springs the power to abide. Let us, then—not seek, not wait, not pursue—but now accept by faith the Savior’s word—Ye *are* the the branches.”<sup>19</sup>

You are the branches. You don’t have to labor to stay connected to the vine. You just trust and rest and let the vine work through you. That’s how grace works. Here’s how Paul says it<sup>20</sup>

**1 Corinthians 15:10** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, *but the grace of God that is with me.*

**Philippians 2:13** “...it is *God who works in you*, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

**Hebrews 13:20-21** “Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, *equip you with everything good* that you may do his will, *working in us that which is pleasing in his sight*, through Jesus Christ,”

On a practical level, what does this abiding in Christ look like? Well ask yourself, what do branches do with the vine? They devour everything that the vine will give them. Hudson Taylor again provides some help, he says “Communion with Christ requires our coming to Him. Meditating upon His

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<sup>19</sup> John Piper, *A Camaraderie of Confidence: The Fruit of Unfailing Faith in the Lives of Charles Spurgeon, George Muller, and Hudson Taylor*, (Wheaton, IL,,: Crossway, 2016), pg. 98

<sup>20</sup> Also see Romans 15:13 and 1 Peter 4:11

person and His work requires the diligent use of the means of grace, specially the prayerful reading of His Word. Many fail to abide because they habitually fast instead of feed.”<sup>21</sup> Hudson was an insatiable feeder. Throughout his multiple travels through China, often by a cart or wheelbarrow, and in the poorest of inns, Hudson insisted on feeding off the vine. Even when all the missionaries had to stay in one room, Hudson would curtain off one corner and wait till everyone was asleep (usually between 2 and 4 am) and then he would light a candle and begin to feed off Christ through prayer and the Word. No matter how wear he was, he knew where all his strength came from. He later said of his busy career “Satan will always find you something to do...when you ought to be occupied [in abiding in Christ] even if it is only arranging a window blind.”<sup>22</sup>

Dear congregation, a failure to feed off or Christ through His word and through secret prayer is striving after the flesh. Because it is a sign of self-reliance. When a branch doesn’t feed off the vine, it says “No I got this, I don’t need what you have to offer. I have enough strength on my own to bear the fruit that you are requiring.” Therefore, paradoxically perhaps, fasting from communion with Christ is fleshly. Jesus said in **John 6:56** “Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.” Therefore do not strive but abide. Drink deeply of all that Christ our vine will give you.

That’s our **duty**: We must abide in Christ not strive, therefore...

Our Delight: To abide in Christ is to abide in His joy

That’s what I think Jesus wants us to take hold of when we read **v.11** These things I have spoken to you, that **my joy may be in you**, and that your joy may be full.” Jesus taught us about abiding in Him, *because* He wants His joy to be in us. This is the summary verse of the first ten verses. It’s the chief end of

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<sup>21</sup> John Piper, *A Camaraderie of Confidence: The Fruit of Unfailing Faith in the Lives of Charles Spurgeon, George Muller, and Hudson Taylor*, (Wheaton, IL,,: Crossway, 2016), pg. 100

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, footnote 42, pg. 100-101

abiding: the joy of Jesus Christ. That's the *essence* of abiding. **Jesus wants us to abide mainly, that our joy would be full in Him.** That's how the Father gets all the glory in v.8, when we receive His Son as the treasure that He is.

He says it slightly different in v.9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. **Abide in my love.**" In other words, "don't deprive yourself of my love. It's yours for the taking." This is how a husband ought to abide in the love his wife. He doesn't abide in her love *mainly* by doing things for her. He will do things for her, but that will be the fruit of his love. How does he *abide* in her love mainly? By enjoying her. By treasuring her. By delighting in her person. That's what Christ is saying here. "Abide in my love...*by* enjoying my love towards you. Abide in my love. Know that you can never disqualify yourself because of your sin. I took care of it on the cross. I know all the worst things about you and all the things that you will still do, and I love you anyways. Abide in my love and know that whatever my Father—the Vinedresser—does in your life, it is so you will grow closer to me. No painful pruning is ever wasted. My Father is faithful to prune you ever so carefully so that you will find your highest and best and greatest satisfaction in Me."