


# Abiding in Jesus



## The Vine and the Branches (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue with our theme for this week: The Vine and the Branches. I trust you've been finding it helpful. Our theme is based on the parable of Jesus in John chapter 15.

In my two previous talks this week I've interpreted the parable as follows: First of all the vine represents Jesus. The sap or the life which flows up from the roots through the vine into the branches, that is the Holy Spirit. As Paul says in Romans 8:10, "The Spirit [capital "S," the Holy Spirit] is life." Then the gardener or more completely, the owner, the one who owns and cultivates the whole vineyard is God the Father. And finally the branches in the vine are the true disciples, the real Christians. And I've pointed out that God's objective in all this can be summed up in just one word: Fruit. And that this fruit is spoken of by Jesus in three successive stages: first of all fruit, then more fruit, and finally much fruit. So that's what God is after out of this vine is fruit, more fruit and much fruit. And that applies to the lives of each one of us.

Now the only alternative to that is no fruit. And the end of the branch that bears no fruit, is to be thrown out to wither and be burned. I pray that may not be the fate of anyone listening to this talk today.

I've explained, too, that fruit comes in two main forms. First of all there's the fruit of character which is called the fruit of the Spirit, bearing in mind that the Spirit is the sap that gives life to the fruit. And secondly, the fruit of other believers won to the Lord through our lives. I pointed out that God has ordained that every tree only bears seed in its fruit, and that out of the fruit comes the seed and out of the seed comes the potential for a new tree. And the book of Proverbs says that also: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, he that wins souls is wise." So we win souls by the seed that comes out of the fruit of our lives. The souls are other believers brought to the Lord.

Today I am going to deal with a vitally important question which arises out of all this, and the question is: What do we have to do in order to produce the fruit that God requires?

Well, in this passage in John 15, that we've been looking at, Jesus states one great, basic condition for bearing fruit: it is

to remain or to abide in Him. In John 15:5, He says this:

> "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

There are only two possibilities there in relationship. One is remaining in Jesus and the other is being apart from Him, being cut off from Him, losing our direct personal contact with Him.

Now, Jesus guarantees, "If a man remains in Me, he will bear much fruit." We don't have to thing first of all in terms of a lot of effort or a lot of religious activity or some program. What we have to focus on first and foremost, is our personal relationship with Jesus. If we remain in Him, He's given us this guarantee: we will bear much fruit. Certain sense, fruit doesn't come by worrying, it doesn't comes by a lot of effort, it doesn't come by a lot of religious activity. It comes by remaining, or abiding in Jesus.

As I pointed out and I want to continue to emphasize, this speaks primarily about a relationship, rather than doctrine or theology. I'm not saying doctrine or theology are unimportant, but if they don't bring us into that relationship, if they don't produce the fruit, then they are vain. The sap, the Spirit or the life, that flows from the roots, up the trunk into the branches is the Holy Spirit. But the trunk is Jesus Himself. We only have the sap as branches if we abide in the trunk, because the trunk is the only channel by which the sap, that is the life, comes to us. This is the universal testimony of the New Testament. We have spiritual, or eternal life, only in Jesus. It's a question of relationship.

In 1 John 5:10-12, this is what John says:

> "Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

Let me read those words again:

> "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

Now again, in that passage as in many others, we are confronted with just two possible alternatives. One is good and one is bad. The first alternative is to believe and have the testimony, or not to believe. And that means to make out God to be a liar. Now, that's a terrible thought. Not believing is tantamount to making out God to be a liar. You may be having the attitude, "Well I don't believe, but I'm not much of a bad person anyhow. I'm as good as some of those who do believe." Well, you may be comparing yourself with the wrong people. But let me suggest to you that it's a terrible responsibility to make Almighty God out to be a liar. But, if you don't believe, that's what you are doing. On the other hand, if you do believe you have the testimony. So, if you don't have the testimony you don't believe, and if you don't believe, you're making God out to be a liar.

The second alternative is this: to have the Son, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and in Him to have eternal life, or not to have the Son of God and not to have eternal life. And see, there is nothing in between the two. Every person belongs in one or other of those two categories. Let me ask you this question: In which category are you?

We see then that the great requirement for bringing forth fruit is abiding or remaining in Jesus. This leads naturally to a second practical question: How can we abide in Jesus? Jesus Himself states two requirements, each of which are simple and each of which are introduced in His teaching by the word "if." The first requirement is to hold fast to the words of Jesus. In John 15:7, He says this:

> "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you."

So there's the condition, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you…", that's the secret, His words remaining in us. Compare this with what Jesus says in the previous chapter of John, chapter 14:23:

> "Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and my Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.'"

So the test of whether we love Jesus is that we keep His word. And if we do keep His word, not only will He love us, but God the Father will love us. And then Jesus makes this amazing statement, "…and We [God the Father and God the Son] will come to him, and make Our abode with him." Isn't that a breathtaking thought, that Almighty God is willing to come and make His abode, His dwelling, in us? What's the condition? Keeping the word of Jesus. So this is central to the whole of the New Testament message is having and obeying the words of Jesus.

The second requirement, already I've said it, it's obeying His commands. In John 15:10, Jesus says,

> "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."

Notice the word "if" that always states a condition, a possibility, you may or you may not. "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love. Just as I've kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love."

So, let's just recapitulate briefly. In order to bring forth fruit, which God requires, the basic condition is abiding or remaining in Jesus. It's not a question of a lot of religious practices or fleshly efforts. It's a question of continuing in the right relationship with Jesus. That's what it all turns on.

Now, in order to abide in Him, Jesus tells us there are two requirements.

First we must hold fast His Word. We cannot over emphasize the importance of putting God's Word in the center of your life. That really is the key to success in practical Christian living. It's to live on and to live by the Word of God. I've seen Christians in many parts of the world, in many different circumstances. I've seen them under persecution, I've seen them in difficulty, I've seen them in loneliness and discouragement, and basically I would say the ones who succeed are the ones who are truly holding fast to the Word of God. If I were to state one requirement for success in Christian living, that would be it: hold fast to the Word of God.

Then, of course, the second requirement is simply a logical continuation from it, we have to obey His commands. It's not enough to know the Bible. That's very important, but it's not sufficient. First you know it, then you obey it. Isn't that so beautifully simple. Perhaps you've been struggling with a lot of effort to be a good Christian. May I suggest to you that what you need to concentrate on is abiding in Jesus. And that means two simple things: holding fast His Word and obeying His commands. May God help you to do that.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow I'll be dealing with another important aspect of this theme, one that is little understood by many Christians; that is, the process of pruning.

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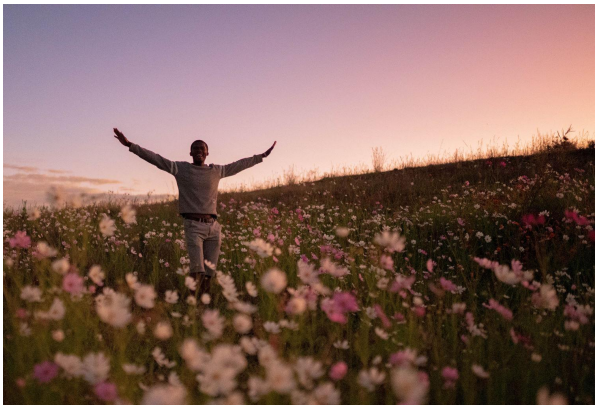

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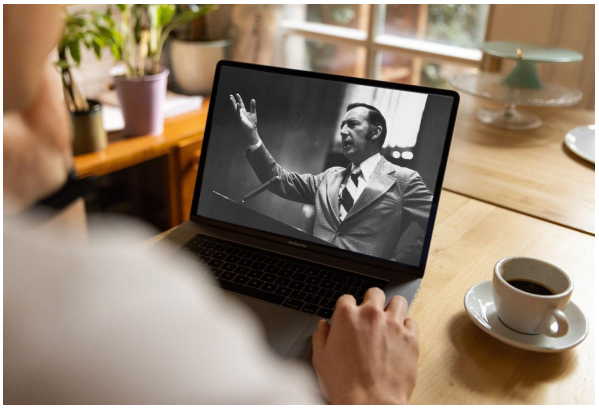

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