

FOUNDATION, Obedience

John 15.1-11:

Most agree that what we have here in John 15 is part of Jesus' farewell sermon at the close of the last supper He shared with His disciples. Here Jesus addresses the fruit that the disciples are to have brought forth in their lives. They are to bear the fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control – all facets of one great dazzling jewel! Jesus desired for the disciples to continue to live a fruitful life after He was gone and He longs the same for us until He returns.

Verse 1: Jesus says, *I am the vine.*

A vine is not the most appealing thing to gaze on (according to Isaiah neither was Christ – Isaiah 53.2). A vine is a spreading plant (Christ's salvation is to spread to the ends of the earth). He is the *true vine*. Since the church is *the branches* it supposes that Jesus is the root. He is that which supports and supplies causing flourishing growth and abundant fruit.

And My Father is the vinedresser (farmer who tills the soil)

The Father upheld Christ and brought Him up out of a dry ground and caused Him to flourish. The Father looks after His vineyard unlike any other. He watches over them so that nothing will hurt them. He will never leave them nor forsake them.

Verse 2: Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away;

In Verse 6 Jesus says, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. Those who do not bear fruit have no union with Christ and therefore are separated from Him (*faith without works is dead*). The Father takes them away.

and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

The Father prunes the true branches. We all need purging and cleansing, so that we may bear fruit, BUT we are *clean*. There is a difference between the pure and the impure.

As Jesus says in Verse 3, You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

The truth of Christ sanctifies and these disciples had been cleansed by the truth of Christ's words. They had their hearts purified by trusting in Jesus.

So you have the Vine, Jesus; you have the branches, the church; you have the Vinedresser, the Father and then there is a command given to the branches, the church, which I think answers *what our most urgent need as a church is?*

And it all comes down to one word, full of depth and meaning...

MENO – a beautiful Greek word that is our most urgent need. It is the word, *abide, remain, continue AND endure, to continue to be present, to remain as one.*

Tightly knitted to this is the word *keep* or *kept* (*tereo* – 15.10), which is *obey, but also, to keep one in the state that he is in.* It is the idea of *holding fast* – Hebrews 3.6: but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house – who house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end (3.14).

Verses 4-5: The key to a fruitful life is *abiding (meno)*. Without such a continuing and remaining in Jesus, one can literally do nothing. There will be no fruit bearing in one's life, just a wasted life. A life without meaning and purpose; a life lived on one's own power missing out on the supernatural power of Jesus Christ in their own life – *a wasted life!*

Then in Verse 6 Jesus begins with condition statements or *if-then* statements. The first in Verse 6 is basically *if no abiding, then no heaven (no abiding = fruitless eternity)*

Verse 7: *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.* Abide in Jesus. It is not simply knowing about Him, but knowing Him. It is a relationship and sweet-fellowship. The idea of abiding in Jesus and His words abiding in us is *interchangeable* just as it is in verse 4: *Abide in Me and I in you.* If Jesus abides in us then His priorities abide in us. His principles abide in us. His promises abide in us. His commandments abide in us (hidden in our heart). To sum it up...Jesus abides in us. This is not just reading the Word, or memorizing it or even meditating on it. As

John Piper says, *We seek the words of Jesus as living words. Words that come from the heart and on the lips of a living Person whom we love more than any other person in the world.*

Is the living voice of Jesus speaking with you through the words He spoke in Scripture? *Jesus abiding in us is Jesus abiding in us speaking.*

So you have this abiding relationship which includes the Word of Christ and also prayer, *fruitful, effective prayer*. In fact, prayer is the relationship.

DA Carson says, that *prayer is one of the foundational steps in an abiding relationship with God— "spiritual, persistent, biblically-minded prayer."* Carson believes that we have become so good at other things that we have forgotten how to pray: *"We have learned how to organize, build institutions, publish books, insert ourselves into the media, develop evangelistic strategies, and administer discipleship programs, but we have forgotten how to pray"* (*A Call to Spiritual Reformation* p. 16).

J.I. Packer wrote about his own journey in prayer saying, *"I believe that prayer is the measure of the man, spiritually, in a way that nothing else is, so that how we pray is as important a question as we can ever face"* (*My Path of Prayer, David Hanes, ed., Worthing, West Sussex: Henry E. Walter, 1981, p. 56*).

When the words of Jesus abide in us we must respond. *Either in faith or unbelief, and obedience or disobedience...Verse 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.* Think about your life - *Who is Lord (who is in control)? Who is giving directions? Who is the authority? Is Jesus King? Is He Supreme?* Jesus says, *look at how I kept the commands of the Father even under the toughest of circumstances.* If you want to experience, enjoy and know the constant embrace of the love of God then obey. Remain faithful.*

This is not just going to happen...

1. Make a PLAN: A place and time when you will read and think about the Word of God. Plan how and what you will read (BIBLE PLAN). Put it on the calendar or in the Blackberry. The same with prayer. DA Carson says, *Much praying is not done because we do not plan to pray. We do not drift into spiritual life...we will not grow in prayer unless we plan to pray. That means self-consciously setting aside time to do nothing but pray.* I personally need to be so much better in this area.

2. Memorize Scripture: Verses, paragraphs or chapters of Scripture. This is not easy, but it brings great reward and power as well as comfort to your life. It will transform the way you pray, think and live.

3. Get Away: Beyond your daily times with God plan to get away for an extended amount of time. Plan a small retreat for yourself. Get away from the kids, etc.

4. Journal: This may not be a daily habit, but something that enhances what we learn. I love this little poem by Piper: *I know not how the light is shed, nor understand this lens. I only know that there are eyes in pencils and pens.*

5.Read: Read great Christian authors who love and know God deeply. If you want a list of authors I will post one on our website this week.

Why abide in Jesus, His Words, in prayer, in love and in keeping His commands?

Verses 8-9, 11: *My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.*

Obedience is evidence and fruit of one who has been justified before God and is being sanctified. Jesus says, *If you love Me, you will keep My commandments (John 14.15). He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me (John 14.21a). He also says, 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. He who does not love Me does not keep My words (John 14.23-24a).* So, if one does not obey the Lord, Jesus says they do not love Him. So, our obedience is fruit of our love for Jesus. We should want to obey God's Word because we love Him.

We abide, remain and continue in Jesus, His Word, in prayer and in obedience that we would give presence (bear much fruit) for the glory of God and our great joy!