

Abide in Jesus

John 15:1-8 (New American Standard Bible)

“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 it so that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ **Remain in Me,** and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself but must **remain in the vine,** so neither can you unless you **remain in Me.** ⁵ **I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.** ⁶ If anyone does not **remain in Me,** he is thrown away like a branch and dries up; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you **remain in Me,** and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

Introduction

In today’s text, Jesus our Lord talks about two kinds of relationships we may have with Him and with our heavenly Father. Believers-in-name-only and fruitful believers. To illustrate His point, He uses a metaphor of the vine (Himself), the branches (us), and the vinedresser (the Father). Hereby, Jesus focuses on the relationship our Father is committed to.

This is the relationship God is committed to: our Father in Heaven sanctifies those who bear fruit for His name’s sake. And to make them more fruitful in their lives, He works on them through His Word. Let’s dig in.

Content

Before I proceed, let me point out **One Thing That We Should Know.**

We ought to have a right understanding on what our relationship with the Father is like. Many of us have a wrong notion on this point. It goes something like this: *God loves me. I am His child. He will bring me into His heavenly Home when I die. In between times, He lets me do my thing my ways and occasionally helps me on the days of my distress. I don’t read the Bible because I am too busy. After all, it is pastor’s job to spoon feed me with it. I don’t pray to God a lot, because He is busy with many other people’s needs. I don’t expect a lot from Him, either. Only occasional help, health, prosperity, and Heaven. That’s all I ask from Him.*

Folks, that’s not what God has in mind in His relationship with you.

In the Bible, our relationship with God is called a ‘covenant’ relationship. That is, two parties, you and God, come into a relationship with the agreement on certain terms. For

instance, as for Him, God says, I will be your God, Provider, Protector, and Sanctifier. I will answer when you call on My name. I will be with you forever.

As for you, God commands, “Never worship any other gods but Me.” “You shall obey My voice and walk in all the way that I command you that it may be well with you (Jeremiah 7:23).” “You will glorify My name with your life.” If you agree on these terms, then, God says, you will be my people and I will be your God. Mind you that this covenant relationship is also a ‘conditional’ relationship. That means, when one party breaks the terms and no longer abides by them, the other party is no longer obligated to stay in the relationship.

Reality: Too many believers in the Church today, totally ignorant of the nature of this relationship, naively believe, act, and say like their relationship with the Lord is forever secured no matter what they do in whatever terms they would like to define. They love to claim that God is their Father. However, they are least serious / interested in keeping God’s commandments in their lives. Listen. If we don’t keep His commandments, no matter how hard we call upon His name, God will not be there for us. Remember: God is only committed to a relationship with us when we listen and obey. “*Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His faithfulness to a thousand generations for those who love Him and keep His commandments;*” (Deuteronomy 7:9).

With that understanding, let’s go to verse 2.

v. 2: “*every branch that bears fruit, He **prunes it** so that it may bear more fruit.*” Note here that it is the Father in Heaven who ‘prunes’ us. The Bible calls such divine pruning process ‘sanctification.’ God the Father is committed to sanctifying His children. He cleanses us in the areas of thoughts, words, and deeds throughout our life. He takes time transforming us into His image here and there with patience. All for our own eternal good.

Please get this: the purpose of ‘pruning,’ ‘sanctifying,’ ‘cleansing,’ and ‘transforming’ work of God is for us to bear more fruit in our lives. For us to be more like Him in our character. To bring glory to His name.

v. 2-8: **‘Bear fruit’:** the phrase ‘bear fruit’ appears in today’s text five times (v. 2—twice, v. 4, 5, 8). What’s that mean to ‘bear fruit’ in our lives? The fruit here is anything that demonstrates we obey Jesus’ commandments. Anything that shows we are Jesus’ disciples. Anything that brings glory to the name of the LORD our God. Matthew 5:16: *Your light must shine before people in such a way that **they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*** E.g., Why do we say, “Sola deo gloria,” “Praise be to God,” “Thanks be to God,” when someone praises us for what we have done well? All to the glory of the Lord. Amen?!

v. 4-7: **‘Remain in Me’:** Once again, these three words appear five times (v. 4—twice, v. 5, 6, 7). Same number as ‘bear fruit.’ We can bear fruit in our lives only when we remain

in Christ. If the bearing fruit is the natural outcome of the believer's life on the outside, the remaining in Jesus is the root hidden. Remember: Jesus says, apart from Him, no one can bear fruit. Sure, you can bear some fruit that may glorify yourself, but that doesn't count here.

I am going to spend the rest of my sermon on **two keys to bearing fruit**: that is, to remain in Jesus and to have His words in us (v. 7). What's that mean, to remain in Jesus and His words remain in us? Ask yourself. Am I in Jesus? Is Jesus in me? Are His words in me? Listen very carefully, since I don't have many opportunities to go over this often. I will explain to you as Jesus explained; what He meant by these words.

Remain in Me:

First, to remain in Jesus means **to believe in Him as the Savior and Lord** (John 5:38) and believe in God the Father who has sent Him. How crucial to have faith in Jesus! If you can say that "Yes, I do believe in Jesus as my Savior and Lord and also believe in God the Father who sent Him for my salvation," then you are in Christ. And you are ready to bear fruit.

Next, to remain in Jesus means **to know Him and the Holy Spirit** (John 14:17). Jesus says that the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit, because it doesn't see Him or know Him. Without the Holy Spirit, no one can truly know Jesus or confess Him as his/her Savior and Lord: *Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit*" (1 Corinthians 12:3). Once again, if you sincerely and truthfully say that Jesus is your Lord, you do have the Holy Spirit in you, and you are in Christ.

Thirdly, to remain in Jesus means **to keep His commandments**, that is, to love one another as He has loved us: *"If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and remain in His love"* (John 15:10). He further says, *"I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another"* (John 13:34). Ask yourself: Do I keep Jesus' commandments? If you do, then you are remaining in Him. If you don't do, you are not in Christ.

My words remain in you:

The Lord uses His words to sanctify us. The Word of God, the Bible, is a pruning shears of our spirit, soul, and body. Now, you know why I always emphasize the importance of getting into His Word. It is twofold. For our heavenly Father to sanctify us and for us to appreciate it. Without the Word of God, God's sanctifying work won't have much cleansing effect on us (v. 3). Without the Word of God, God's work on us will be limited. In other words, if we don't read, hear, meditate, and act on God's Word daily, divine cleansing work won't make much progress in our soul and spirit. E.g., Our God is merciful and forgiving. He

wants us to be merciful and forgiving like Him. How can, then, God teach us to forgive our enemies unless we heed to His Word such as “Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44)? By obeying this command in His Word, we glorify our heavenly Father (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Obviously, there are some folks that do not remain in Jesus, even in the Church.

Those Who Do Not Remain in Jesus

Their characteristics are the opposite of that of those who remain in Jesus. First, they do **not believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior**. They may be religious, they may give offerings, and serve on committees, yet, they may not have Jesus as their Lord yet. Next, they do **not know the Spirit of God**. Thirdly, they **do not obey God’s will** in their lives. They fail or refuse to be the instrument of God in their daily lives. They live their lives their ways. They are the boss in their lives, not Christ, even though they may attend church. They don’t do God’s works through obedience. They don’t produce any good works that glorify the name of their Father in Heaven.

What’s Going to Happen to Them?

They will be removed from the vine (v. 2). The Father will remove them, like the vinedresser takes away the dead branch from the vine. They will be gathered up and be thrown into the fire, and are burned, Jesus says in verse 6. Some of us may be shocked with what Jesus says here: such a loving heavenly Father cuts off and denies some church people from His kingdom. You may even say it is harsh and cruel. But as I said before, consider the covenant relationship we are in. God is never committed to such a loose laissez-faire relationship that doesn’t abide in the commandments of God.

Conclusion

Let me conclude my sermon with Jesus’ own words about how important to bear good fruit and to do the will of our Father in Heaven. Matthew 7:15-27.

¹⁵ “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ So **every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.** ¹⁸ **A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.** ¹⁹ **Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.** ²⁰ So then, you will know them by their fruits.

²¹ “**Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.** ²² Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons,

and in Your name perform many miracles?’²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; leave Me, you who practice lawlessness.’

²⁴ *“Therefore, **everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts on them, will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.*** ²⁵ *And the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.* ²⁶ *And **everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.*** ²⁷ *And the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and its collapse was great.”* Be the fruit-bearing Christian by keeping His commandments. Amen.