

“Abiding in Christ” (Jn. 15)

1. Abiding in Christ Yields Fruit (1-8)
 - a. Sad & Beautiful Realities of God’s Purpose & Provisions
 - i. Jesus’ parable (or analogy) of Himself being the “true vine” harkens back to Isaiah’s prophesy of God’s revelation analogy of His vine which was the nation Israel (see Isa. 5:1-7).
 - ii. God had provided all the circumstances which ought to have yielded a productive harvest yet Israel only yielded “stinky” grapes.
 - iii. Another parable, this time given by Jesus Himself, expressed the horrible reality of His rejection by His own people (Mat. 21:33-45).
 - iv. But God’s beautiful provision is that it is not up to the branches alone to bear fruit nor is it for us to bathe ourselves – it is God’s doing and it is marvelous. Jesus quoted Ps. 118:22-23 in Mat. 21:42!
 - v. We who abide have been **bathed** and literally spiritually **regenerated** (Titus 3:5).
 - b. Structure of John’s Account
 - i. David Gooding identified a chiastic structure (e.g. A, B, C, in chs. 13-14 & A’, B’, C’ in chs. 15-16).
 - A – Parable of Foot Cleansing 13:1-20. A’ – Parable of Vine ‘cleansing’ 15:1-17
 - B – Exposing of Judas’ Betrayal 13:21-32. B’ – Exposing of World’s Hatred 15:18-27
 - C – Jesus’ Departure 13:33-14:31. C’ Jesus’ Departure 16.
 - ii. Gooding’s observation is strengthened when we see that the Greek word which is often translated as “pruning” is literally “cleansing” (purifying).
 - c. Place of the Branches
 - i. It is good to ‘know your place’ so to speak. When one finds his niche in a career, organization, or local body of believers; he (or she) is productive and peaceful.
 - ii. It is God (the Vine) who produces the branches and prunes (cleanses) them – not unlike He calls, sanctifies, preserves, and employs us. Like the living parable of foot washing displayed, He had already bathed them, but they were to come to Him for repeated foot washings – not baths.
 - iii. Beautiful Antinomy. Antinomy = apparent opposition of two contrary ideas, both of which arrive due to correct reasoning. Perhaps a paradox is more apropos. So what is the paradox? It is that we must abide yet it is He who keeps us. Jn. 10:28-29; 6:44; Phil. 2:12-13; 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:23-25 offer affirmation of the paradox.
 - iv. What is encouraging is that when we fail, we can go back to the Word and draw on His assurances. And an assurance is that we will bear fruit. If we do not, we are not abiding and if we are not abiding, we are not of the source and thus will be cut off and cast away (v. 6).
 - v. How to abide: we abide by trusting the Word and continually being renewed and washed by it. In Col. 3:15-17 Paul gives advice how to abide i.e. stay unified and enjoy the peace provided in Christ.
 - vi. Assurance is offered but it only takes when we can look back to the fruit produced. Each of the verses and passages which offer security in salvation is always accompanied with evidence of salvation. It is silly to claim to eternal security when one has no evidence to show. See 1 Jn. 3:14-18.
 - vii. In fact Jesus includes this concept here in the parable vv. 7-8 and in v. 10.

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- viii. Nevertheless, there are those w/o fruit who yet appear (their placement so to speak) is in the vine yet they fail to produce. See I Jn. 2:18-19. There is a professed church and a spiritual church. There is a prostituted bride and a persecuted bride – a putrid (stinky grapes) bride and a purified (cleansed) bride. There is a religious harlot bride who rides the beast of the state and a persecuted bride who follows the slaughtered Lamb. There is an unfaithful bride who sells herself to adorn in jewels and luxury and a faithful bride who loves not her life “even unto death” (Rev. 12:11) who is the brilliant jewel (Rev. 21:9-11). For a time one seems to be a part of the vine but never yields true fruit.
 - ix. God’s chosen people have, are, and will always be those who are cleansed and bearing fruit in the true Vine. They are seen in the OT and NT as: The Bride, the Bush (Vine), the Building (Temple), and the Body (of Messiah). And Jesus assures His followers that they will be conformed to His image (Ro. 8:29), they will bear fruit, and they will (in doing so) glorify God (cf. Mat. 5:16).
 - x. Salvation is not about mere forgiveness but of a new life (born again Jn. 3:3; 2 Cor. 5:17) of transformation, fruit, and glory.
 - xi. Fruit is thus produced which sanctifies us (Ro. 8:29) and glorifies God by us merely abiding in Christ. God uses difficult “pruning” in our lives to produce fruit and we simply cling to the one whose hands holds the loppers.
 - xii. It is thus only natural for the Vine Dresser to remove the stinky grape producing vines (see Isa. 5:5-7 cf. v. 6 in this chapter). Gooding said of Israel re: Isa. 5, “Their religious ritual and temple sacrifices had become a hollow sham. Their commerce was riddled with lying and cheating, with heartless exploitation and ruthless oppression of the poor. Their family and social life was rotten with unfaithfulness, immorality, and infanticide.”¹ *****Gooding church getting political
 - xiii. So, the problem was no good produce but the answer would be for the “True” (v. 1) Vine (or true Israel) to come forth in the fullness of time. God would not just abandon the project (how could omniscient One abandon a perfect plan?) but to continue with the prophesied remnant to Messiah! It would be the Messiah Himself who would become the vine which produces luscious fruit!
2. Abiding in Christ **Enjoys** God & Expresses His Love (9-17)
- a. Though Jesus left the vine analogy, He continued with the fruit of being in the vine which includes joy, love, and purpose.
 - b. A Greater Joy (9-12) Do you have joy? Not as the world celebrates self, sin, and sensuality; our joy is derived from abiding in Christ. I count 15 times in this chapter where “abide,” “remain,” “keep,” etc. are written. This is perhaps a reason for the chapter break. Jesus spoke of bearing fruit, experiencing joy in the fellowship of God, and affirms the world’s animosity for Him and His own – and in every section there are multiple emphases of abiding.
 - c. It is a joy to do the work of God – having Him work through us. It is a thrill and Jesus referred to such as “food” (Jn. 4:31-34).
 - d. The branches are thrilled to do as purposed and produce luscious grapes. Consider the analogy in Judges 9:12-13). And it is pertinent and profound to note that even with the

¹ Gooding, D. (2013). *In the School of Christ: Lessons on Holiness in John 13–17* (p. 128). Coleraine, Northern Ireland: Myrtlefield House.

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ominous work of the Cross directly ahead of Him, Jesus sang a hymn (Matt. 26:30) (Gooding insightfully noted).

- e. A Greater Love (13). Love that loves to the end. We are called to be willing to lay down our lives (e.g. Ro. 16:3-4) and some are “numbered” to martyrdom (Rev. 6:9-11) and we do not know if we are of that number. This supernatural love is the mark of the natural Christian life!
- f. A Greater Fellowship (14-15) Friends! What? Too many today have softened (watered down) God’s holiness and thus such verses lose their weight.
- g. Furthermore, it would be atrocious for our Savior and Master to die for us yet be unwilling to forgive another or sacrifice for another – which is ultimately for Him (Mat. 25:35-40). How could we call Him friend if we refuse to treat Him as such? See also Mat. 18:21-35 & I Jn. 3:14-18. Such is why it is only natural for Jesus to say that if you love Me, you will keep my commandments – which are to love as He loves us!
- h. A Great Comfort (16-17) Since He chose us and will lose no one, we are secure and we will bear fruit!
- i. Gooding well summed up both the comfort and freedom expressed in these two verses. “Every believer has been deliberately and personally chosen by Christ to bear fruit that shall last. Every cluster of Christian virtues and graces that have been developed in a believer’s character; every person brought to faith in Christ as a result of witnessing the quality of that believer’s life; every piece of fruit will last eternally. The joy of it shall never die away. And notice the generous way in which the Lord phrases himself: ‘I chose you ... that you should go and bear fruit and that *your* fruit should abide.’ Your fruit! Do we, then, produce it? In one sense, no. Without him we could do nothing. He had to supply the wherewithal. He had to maintain us. It was the Father who was the husbandman. Yet, when the result is accomplished, he genuinely calls it our fruit. For this process is not one that swamps our personalities.”²

3. Abiding in Christ Endures Opposition (18-25)

- a. The world first hated Him (18). The “prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), persuaded Adam and Eve that God was against them, and that the way to enjoy life was to rebel against God and his Word and seize and enjoy all life’s good things in independence of God. They fell for Satan’s lie, and the resultant guilt feelings and bad conscience made them feel that God must certainly now be against them. They ran away, trying to hide from God, who for them had now become the great threat.”³
- b. The World hates the exclusivity of Christ. It wants to decide what is true and what is the way and life. But is there is a God, why would we expect to come to Him on our terms rather than his?
- c. Either one is for Christ or against Him (see. Mat. 12:30; Lu. 11:23). Also see Lu. 6:26.
- d. No divided loyalties Mat. 6:19-24.
- e. V. 22 “The phrase ‘to have sin’ means to be blameworthy, culpable.”⁴ It obviously doesn’t mean they are sinless in a wooden literal sense. But such is why Jesus came, to be the revelation and Way to God.

² Ibid. 163–164.

³ Ibid. 171.

⁴ Ibid. 177.

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- f. Furthermore, it's not that they were without revelation of God as even the Gentiles shared general revelation (see Ro. 1). But the Jews had the specific revelation of His Word which indeed predicted their very rejection (e.g. Ps 35:19; 69:4; 109:5; Isa. 53:1-3).
- 4. Abiding in Christ Bears Witness (26-27)
 - a. His ways are not our ways – they are superior!
 - b. A Gracious Spirit: Rather than abandon a hostile world, He makes us His witnesses to it but not without His Spirit.
 - c. The Holy Spirit empowers us to endure and expand. Rather than ‘abandon’ a rejecting world, God employs His Spirit, His Word, and His Church to endure that many would come to repentance.
 - d. Many times, it is the endurance of opposition which convicts sinners to repentance and salvation. If it were not so, then why would God call disperse us as sheep among wolves?
 - e. A victorious witness: “The gospel today is being preached around the world more than it has ever been preached in the past twenty centuries. Indeed, millions more people are currently hearing the gospel than ever was dreamed of even a century ago; and walls which hostile governments built round their countries, in their attempt to stamp out the Christian faith and prevent this gospel reaching their citizens, have come tumbling down. We may then have every confidence in the power and wisdom, the tactic, the strategy, and the effectiveness of the Holy Spirit’s masterminding of the campaign of witness for Christ in the world. And in that confidence we may pursue our own witness for the Lord.”⁵
 - f. Abiding is not sinfulness cf. 1 Jn. 1:5-2:3. We are holy (positionally) and we become holy (practically) by clinging to the powerful transformative Word (Ps. 18:30). When we cling to the Word of our testimony (Jesus), we will love not the world nor even our lives unto death (see Rev. 12:11).

⁵ Ibid. 180.