



ABIDING IN CHRIST



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"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you [are] the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:1-5)

The grapevine has always been a special plant, especially because from one vine grow many grapes. In the Old Testament the grapevine symbolized Israel's fruitfulness and fulfillment of God's work on the earth, which we can see in the book of Isaiah when in a vision and through a song about a grapevine, namely about Israel, we read, "Now let me sing to my Well-

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beloved A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard On a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, And also made a winepress in it; So He expected [it] to bring forth [good] grapes, But it brought forth wild grapes.” (Isaiah 5:1-2) In that day Israel was not bearing good fruit. God had done all He could, but the fruit was not there. The Israelites actually were not focused on the things of God, rather they were focused on themselves; greedily grabbing all the more property for themselves, caring mainly about amusement, and committing injustice. Unfortunately, because of this God the Father, as the vinedresser, had to cut them down.

In the story Jesus told, the same thing is shared. Jesus said that He is

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the true vine and that His Father is the vinedresser. This was not a new comparison to the people, they knew God the Father as the vinedresser, that of His people, who were branches engrafted in Christ, as the vine He expects us to bear fruit for His kingdom.

God the Father did not mean for His church to be preoccupied with fulfilling religious activities. The church is not a passive, like-minded organization made up of good people who are accepted by the world. God did not mean for His gospel to be some kind of life insurance policy or benefit for our selfish desires and appetites. God the Father first of all desires for us to bear fruit for Him and praise His name among the peoples.

In today’s time we expect fruit in order to pile up material things for ourselves, which will lead us to rebel against God, just as Israel did in the time of Hosea the prophet when the fruit was used to increase the altars and for decoration, not for God’s glory. “Israel empties his vine; He brings forth fruit for himself. According to the multitude of his fruit He has increased the altars; According to the bounty of his land They have embellished [his] sacred pillars. Their heart is divided; Now they are held guilty. He will break down their altars; He will ruin their sacred pillars.” (Hosea 10:1-2)

1. GOD , WITHOUT EXCEPTION, EXPECTS OF EVERY BELIEVER TO BRING FORTH FRUIT FOR HIS KINGDOM SO AS TO GLORIFY HIS NAME.

“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”
(John 15:8)

Jesus very clearly displayed the truth and we must not ignore His powerful words. Christ is the vine and God the Father our vinedresser, who cares for the branches and causes them to bear fruit. Fruitful branches are all those who say that they follow Christ and because of living fellowship with Him they bring forth much fruit. If we claim that we are Christians then we belong to Christ, if we belong to Christ we must bring forth much fruit for Him. God the Father expects fruit for His kingdom.

If we turn away from a living relationship with Jesus Christ, we will become superficial and religious Christians and we will cease bearing fruit for Him. When this happens God the Father will have to remove us from the vine. Non-productive believers are actually dead believers; they are dead branches that God will remove for the good of others. “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw [them] into the fire, and they are burned.” (John 15:6)

I personally believe that some segments of today’s church are totally blind and in deception in regards to Christ. Christians believe that if they attend church they are saved and all is well. To many Christ is just one more means of security in life or someone who provides them things in order to have an easy life on earth, just as in the time of Hosea. It is as if they believe that Christ exists only to multiply fruit for the personal well-being of the individual and for the well-being of God’s kingdom or His name. Christ was very clear, if we claim that we are His, He expects fruit from us regardless of which church we attend, otherwise He will have to cut us off from Himself. In other words, we may continue with our Sunday services, complete various projects, and live our religious lives while in terrifying reality He has cast us aside!

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Believes who do not abide in Christ and who do not bring forth fruit are not only worthless for Him, they also infect the rest of the vine. What often happens is that these people attempt to stop the efforts of believers who abide in Christ. These believers do not have God's true power and strength and in the end become enemies of God. When reading these words of Jesus, we must put to the side the legendary sermons on grace that permit just about anything, even unfruitfulness. Jesus Christ was clear when He said that if we claim we are His, if we "...are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you..." (John 15:3), if we abide in Him then fruit must follow and it must be visible.

Another kind of believer is one which brings forth fruit. At times Christ must,

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by various situations, remove some of our branches that are not so fruitful in order that we may remain healthy. This is called pruning, which in other words means that God must discipline us sometimes in order to strengthen our character and our faith so in the end we will bring forth more fruit. In the end, God expects fruit, so therefore be ready for some cutting or pruning, because status quo is not permitted.

2. SIMPLY ABIDING IN CHRIST CAN BRING LIFE — THAT IS THE FRUIT THAT GOD EXPECTS.

"I am the vine, you [are] the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. „ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." (John 15:5, 7-8)

The problem that we find is that we try in our own strength, without living fellowship with Christ, to be good, honest people who do that which is right. Christ did not say that we ought to try to be better in our own strength; rather He said that the only way to a good and fruitful life is to stay close to Him, just like a branch that is grafted into a vine. Apart from Christ our efforts are in vain. Rather than true fruit, we will bring forth the "fruit of lies"

as Israel did in the time of Hosea, because without Christ will bear fruit that is not of Him. Without Christ we are not Christ's, Israel "plowed wickedness, reaped iniquity and ate the fruit of lies". (Hosea 10:13) This can also happen to us when are not close to Christ. We can simply begin to lose the life of Christ and begin bearing the works of the flesh.

Speaking about fruit that result from abiding in Him, Christ did not necessarily mean the fruit of the salvation of the soul, which is just one kind of fruit; rather it is understood that He meant the other fruits that are clearly mentioned, such as answered prayer. He said that if we remain in Him that we will ask whatever we desire and we will receive it. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." (John 15:7) In other words, if we do not abide in Him our prayers will not be answered, but if we abide in Him our fruit will be obvious by answered prayer.

Also, another fruit of abiding in Him is joy. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and [that] your joy may be full." (John 15:11) We always feel good when all goes as it should, but when difficulty arises we often fall into depression. Yet, true joy always

rises above the waves of circumstances because joy comes from abiding with Jesus Christ, and not from a change in circumstance. When our lives are intertwined with His He will always help us through difficult times and we will not fall into deep depression or tend toward false highs of emotions. This is why it is important to daily walk with Him because He will help us maintain our joy regardless of our circumstances.

Apart from that, the Apostle Paul described this fruit in Galatians, fruit such as love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22). There is also the fruit that Paul described when he said that God's "divine power has given to us all things that [pertain] to life and godliness... faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, and brotherly-kindness." (2 Peter 1:5-7)

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Our efforts without abiding in Christ can bring only lifeless, fruitless religiosity which cannot bear true fruit for Christ. Only abiding in Christ can bring fruit for the glory of the Father and for the well-being of those around us, which will be witnessed that we are Christ's disciples according to our fruit, and not just because we attend church.

Practically speaking, abiding in Christ means that we have living fellowship with Him, that we believe that He is God's Son "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." (1 John 4:15); that we have received Him as our Savior and Lord "But as many as received Him, to them He

gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12); that we have done what He has commanded "Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us." (1 John 3:24); that we believe in the gospel "Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father." (1 John 2:24) and that we continue to live and walk in love and fellowship with the believers in Christ's body "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12). We will be able to practice devoted love only when we abide in Him.

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3. ONLY ABIDING IN CHRIST CAN HELP US MAINTAIN OUR PERSEVERANCE UNDER THE PRESSURES OF THIS WORLD.

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before [it hated] you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble." (John 15:18-20b, 16:1)

The problem of acceptance is a big problem. I believe that this kind of message is not often preached, but there dwells in us a desire to be liked by others thinking that that when we change for the cause of Christ others accept us more. Yet, we are witnesses that people often reject us regardless of any great change that takes place in us, and just when we begin abiding in Christ! The reason for this is because they do not want to come to the light and come to know God. Christ clearly told us that we are not greater than Him and that we will be persecuted as He was, sometimes without a reason. "But [this happened] that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'" (John 15:25)

The thing is that we do not belong to the world and we do not have try to make the world accept us. The problem with today's Christianity, churches, and believers is that they compromise in the name of love in order to lighten the pressure and become accepted by the world so they can have peace with those around them. It seems to me that at times Christianity is experienced as an alternative to a peaceful religion. Of course, it is not aggressive in the sense of human aggression, but it is also not

just another alternative, rather it is following the one, true God, Jesus Christ who did not speak of it as just another religion to save the world in love and peace. What's more is that following Christ can divide families and bring persecution, mockery, rejection and other similar consequences.

So, what about us? We do not enjoy feeling rejection, and because of that we make various compromises. Rather than abiding in Christ, who promised to give us the Holy Spirit as our defender and comforter in every situation, in our own strength we fail to withstand the pressure of those around us and therefore compromise with family, co-workers, and others in the world in order to be accepted and overwhelmed with happy emotions.

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Although we may feel good emotions, reality can be harsh – and that being that when we live this way Christ does not dwell in us. Only those believers who abide in Christ and who are filled with the Holy Spirit will be able to withstand the pressure that cannot be avoided when they live with Him, because He, Himself, said that “the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.” (John 16:2-3)

The only way to be saved from being cut down, the only way to be saved from pressure, the only solution for us and the world around us is to abide in Christ. Apart from Him there is no salvation, life, joy, or peace! Apart from Him there is only a dead religion that, by good works

and acceptance by the world, brings a good but false sense of peace. This is why we stand in Him and abide in Him. Stand firm in Christ regardless of our circumstances and be encouraged. In the end He will overcome the world! He didn't just leave us to fight, which is why He said to us, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) He is the victor in whose strength we can glorify our Heavenly Father and bear true fruit for eternity!

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