

JOHN 15 - THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

(Verse by Verse)

These are notes taken from a teaching by E.G. von Trutzschler (“pastor Von”) at a New Tribes Mission annual conference in Bolivia (and I’ve added some notes - Art Barkley)

:1 *I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser.*

The implication here is that there are “untrue” vines. Those who entrust their lives to Christ are of the “true” Vine. God the Father is the Gardener, Jesus is the Vine, we are the branches. The Vinedresser (or Gardener) speaks of God’s sovereignty, ownership, care and protection. God has a hedge around us.

Job 1:10 *“Have You not made a **hedge** about him and his house and **all** that he has, ... ?*

:2 *Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away (or lifts up); and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.*

“in Me” speaks of salvation (he is referring to those who **are** Christians). We’re not “in Christ” **because of** bearing fruit. We don’t **earn** salvation by our fruit; we produce fruit **because** we are abiding in Christ. Who of us would be saved by our own righteousness or faithfulness?

Ec. 7:20 ... *there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.*

A Christian may or may not bear fruit. “Cuts off / breaks off” refers to divine discipline. God reacts, perhaps removing me to another place (perhaps to heaven).

1 Cor. 5:5 *I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (See also 2 Cor. 2:5-8)*

1 Cor. 11:30 *For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep (**died**).*

1 Cor. 3:15 *If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; **but he himself will be saved**, yet so as through fire.*

“Bears fruit” Fruit is the **character of Christ** being produced in us by the work of God. What does a natural fruit do? It satisfies, brings pleasure.

Gal. 5:22-23 *the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

Pruning speaks of removing parts that, from God’s perspective, are a hindrance to what He wants to accomplish in and through my life. Their harmful character may or may not be obvious to me; for example, parasitic plants. Who but God can decide what has value? All pruning hurts for awhile. The bottom line is: Can I trust Him? Trials reveal Christian character.

Heb. 12:4-11 ... *He disciplines us **for our good**, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but **sorrowful**; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*

Rom. 5:3-4 ... *we also exult in our **tribulations**, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven **character**; and proven character, **hope**;*

:3 *You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*

You are clean because of what He has accomplished; “*clean*” is an appropriate reminder of salvation. The disciples were clean; Judas was unclean. Clean relates to “union”, whereas washing relates to “communion”. Our feet get dirty as we walk daily in this world.

John 13:10-11 *Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is **completely clean**; and **you are clean**, but not all of you. For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."*

:4 *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*

“Abide” does not speak of salvation, but “**fellowship**”; it is not union, but “**communion**”. Union depends on God, communion depends on me. (for example, as in a marriage relationship) Abide/remain (used 64 times by apostle John) means “to dwell, continue, tarry, endure”, “to continue in communion/fellowship without unresolved conflicts”.

Scofield on “abiding” – “*Having no sin unjudged and unconfessed, no interest into which He is not brought, no life He cannot share. The abiding one takes his burdens to Him, draws wisdom, life, and strength from Him. It is not unceasing consciousness of these things, and of Him, but that nothing is allowed in the life which separates from Him.*” (pp. 1136-37).

Can continual communion be maintained? Is God unreasonable? On page 164 of “*Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret*” we read, “**We should never be conscious of not abiding** in Christ.” (If I have a thorn in my foot, or a particle in my eye, do I ignore it, or pretend it doesn’t exist?) Only unacknowledged sin can break fellowship. Confession immediately restores fellowship. Jesus calls us to a “rest” (see Matt. 11:28-30). Not a “striving” to rest, but rather a vigilance, sensitivity to anything that would disturb that relationship. If I am “honestly” doing what I believe to be pleasing to Him, I can trust Him to show me otherwise.

Illustration: An object held in an open hand does not strive, yet is not overcome by gravity. If the object represents you as a soul, then gravity would be like the sinful nature in our body, and the hand would be like the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 30:20-21 *Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. Your ears will hear a word behind you, “This is the way, walk in it,” **whenever** you turn to the right or to the left.*

Walking in the light speaks of **communion**. Am I aware of darkness? Darkness speaks of sin. This is dangerous! Our eyes adjust if we are not careful.

1 John 1:7 *but if we walk **in the Light** as He Himself is in the Light, we have **fellowship** with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

God uses His Word to train us.

Heb. 5:13-14 *For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who **because of practice** have their senses trained to discern good and evil. (See also Hebrews 4:12)*

We're all at different levels in our Christian growth - child, adolescent, adult. He alone knows where I am, and deals with me accordingly. He doesn't expect me to act beyond my age.

Communion is **conditional**. His promise is conditional on **my** choices, like so many other promises He makes. The choice to abide/remain indicates that my natural tendency is one of "not abiding/remaining"

:5 *I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

The **natural**, absolute result of being connected is that I **will** bear fruit! Fruit comes from "**just being healthy**". There is no reason to compare ourselves to others.

2 Cor. 10:12 ... *when they ... compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.*

We have different gifts, just as there are different types of natural fruit. People are looking for fruit that satisfies, they want "**good**" fruit. "**Activity**" is not necessarily "good fruit". "**Nothing**" has no eternal value, and no eternal reward. We can do plenty in the flesh

1 Cor. 13:1-3 *If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.*
John 6:63 *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing;*

:6 *If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

Jesus wasn't attempting to "keep" Himself in union with the Father (see v. 10). This verse speaks of my testimony before the world, not salvation (see v. 2). God sees my faith (invisible to men), but men see my works (visible to men) – see v. 8.

John 13:35 *"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*
James 2:14-26 ... *just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.*

God was held in contempt by the world due to king David's sin (see 2 Sam. 12:14). A healthy branch is fixed, but flexible (manageable, pliable, teachable, moldable). A dead branch is brittle, hard, self-willed, unbendable, unmoldable, unteachable.

:7 *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.*

We'll be in line with Him. We'll learn to think like Him. God is not a "name it and claim it" wishing well. He wants to change my desires, the things I would wish for.

Amos 3:3 *Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so? (NIV)*
Psalm 37:4 *Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart.*

:8 By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

Frustration and failure are unpleasant, but are used by God to draw us closer to Himself. We are lights in the darkness. There is no competition like in the secular world; God gets the glory. There are no politics in an organism. There is no room for selfish ambitions in our work.

Matt. 5:14-16 “You are the light of the world. ... “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

John 7:18 “He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Gal. 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

:9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

“as” is important. He loves us in the same way the Father loves Him. We see the Father's love and care for His Son. Jesus entrusted Himself completely into that care.

1 Peter 2:21-23 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

: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.

We are called to entrust ourselves completely into His hands.

Rom. 12:1-2 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

How do we abide/remain? Obey! Obedience is "voluntary". Obey what? Obey the Holy Spirit.

Gal. 5:16-17 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

We are given but one command relating to others = **Love one another** (v.12)

Gal. 5:14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

There is danger in omission, that is not obeying/not doing what we believe to be right. Just as “darkness” is “the absence of light”.

James 4:17 ... to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

:11 *These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.*

An appropriate time to speak of "joy"?

Heb. 12:2 *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the **joy** set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*

We must abide/remain, then we will bear fruit, and then we will experience God's joy. Not just joy, but rather "Jesus' joy" in full measure.

John 17:13 *"But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have **My** joy made full in themselves.*

:12 *This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.*

Fruit is for others (fruit of the Spirit). Love is a choice; it is choosing to give another's welfare and interests the same importance as my own. "as" puts it within the realm of our possibility.

Matt. 22:39 *"... 'You shall love your neighbor **as** yourself.'*
Mat. 23:11 *"... the greatest among you shall be your **servant**.*
Phil. 2:3-4 *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not **merely** look out for your own personal interests, but also for the **interests of others**.*

:13 *Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*

It is an "attitude" of willingness.

Matt. 20:26 *... whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your **servant**,*
John 10:15-18 *even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ... "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. "No one has taken it away from Me, but **I lay it down on My own initiative**. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."*
Phil. 2:3-8 *... Have this **attitude** in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ...*

:14 *You are My friends, if you do what I command you.*

A friend is one who yields his allegiance to another. Partners together with Christ.

1 Cor. 3:6-9 *... then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's **fellow workers**; ...*

:15 *No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

A friend knows the Master's business.

Eph. 5:17 *So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

:16 *You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you.*

Chose/Election - Who knows why? No one is better than another. We can only be grateful.

John 6:44 *“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; ...*
John 6:65 (Jesus said) *no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”*
Rom. 3:11 *There is none who seeks for God;*

The fruit that the Holy Spirit produces through me as I abide has eternal value.

2 Cor. 4:17 *For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,*

:17 *This I command you, that you love one another.*

One command encompasses all. As I abide in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, He will draw others to Himself through the love for others that He will manifest through my life.

John 13:35 *“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

REVIEW: RESULTS OF ABIDING/REMAINING IN CONTINUAL FELLOWSHIP:

- v. 2. **I will be pruned/disciplined/corrected to make me more fruitful.**
- v. 5, 12, 17 **The Holy Spirit will draw others to Himself as I allow His love to touch them.**
- v. 7. **I will be communicating/praying and seeing answers.**
- v. 8. **God will be glorified through my life.**
- v. 11. **I will be experiencing His joy.**
- v. 16. **I will be bearing fruit that has eternal benefits.**