

Abide in Christ's Life

John 15:1-8

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Introduction: The immediate problem for the Disciples is this: Jesus is leaving them and they cannot follow. They are deeply anxious about this. Making matters worse, in His absence, He has commanded them to love and serve one another and not to allow their hearts to be troubled. But just telling them this does not make it happen...and both they and we know it.

Knowing their anxiety and weakness, Jesus promises that God The Holy Spirit will come and live in them. He will be the helper they will need to accomplish what Jesus is calling them to. The Spirit will help believers understand Christ Words...He is still doing that. The Holy Spirit will grant peace that quenches anxiety. Not the negative peace that the world gives which is the absence of conflict. The Spirit gives peace that overcomes surrounding and inner conflict. The Holy Spirit, is the answer to human anxiety and weakness. Jesus has called broken, sinners to do the impossible. To love Him, to obey Him, to love one another, to have peace that overcomes circumstances, to understand Christ's Words and to be at ease in a world gone mad. One of two things will happen to believers in this world. We either live a life of worry and failure or we take the help offered and live joyfully, peacefully and hopefully in Christ.

As surely as there is only one way of Salvation, there is likewise only one way to live the Christian life. There are many approaches to becoming a follower of Christ, but they all end up in the same ditch until we learn complete dependence on the Holy Spirit **to daily produce the life of Christ in us**. Jesus is preparing you to live a rich and joyful life in this world. This is not the prosperity gospel. It is the good news that in this fallen world and with these sinful broken natures we can and will have love, joy and peace. AND...not just when we die and go to heaven.

John 16:33In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

You have been given, **in this life**, the Holy Spirit as an eternal helper. The Spirit delights in and is tasked with making Christ glorious in the world. He does this in a variety of ways, but one of the most spectacular is by taking redeemed sinners and transforming them into Christlike men and women. This is the work of the Spirit alone. It is your destiny to be like Christ. What God determines to do cannot be thwarted by your weakness. Putting Christ on display in the world by transforming youamazing! Glorious!

Romans 8:29 ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Yes...God uses preachers, teachers, the Bible and godly churches, but the transformation is a total work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit strips the veil of spiritual blindness from our

eyes through these human means to show us the Glory of our Lord Jesus. As that is done we are metamorphasized into the image of Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

If you really want your life to bring glory to God now, then quit worrying about what you should do and start thinking about and pursuing who you should become. How are you ever going to be...."CHRISTLIKE?" Jesus tells us....

John 15:1-8 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 "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. 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. 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. ⁷ "If you abide in Me, and My words abide 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.

There is no self-effort seen in this passage. There is however.... complete dependence on God. I usually hear this preached as a "get out there and bear some fruit" motivational talk. If you don't do it God will cut you off like so much dead wood and cast you into the fire. If you have tried that you already know you can't do it. Let's start with verse one.

I am the true vine [1a]: Everything always starts with Jesus and not us. We need to get this into our minds so that it begins to soak every thought. Israel was the vine that God had planted in the earth, but she became corrupt and wild. Not bearing the fruit that God intended for her. She was to make Him known in the world as the Glorious and gracious God of Creation.

Jeremiah 2:21 ²¹ I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against me into a corrupt, wild vine?

Jesus is the true vine. He is the revealer and declarer of God in the world. God always knew Israel would fail at this. They are broken, sinful humans after all. It is amazing that men actually think that God expected Israel to perform properly or just be cast aside. Listen to what God says to Israel when they had completely forsaken Him and were living as slaves in Babylon. They had never been more rebellious and godless! Then Jeremiah, under inspiration, wrote this;

Jeremiah 31:35-40 ³⁵ This is what the LORD says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its

waves roar-- the LORD Almighty is his name: ³⁶ "Only if these decrees vanish from my sight," declares the LORD, "will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me." ³⁷ This is what the LORD says: "Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done," declares the LORD. ³⁸ "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when this city will be rebuilt for me from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. ³⁹ The measuring line will stretch from there straight to the hill of Gareb and then turn to Goah. ⁴⁰ The whole valley where dead bodies and ashes are thrown, and all the terraces out to the Kidron Valley on the east as far as the corner of the Horse Gate, will be holy to the LORD. The city will never again be uprooted or demolished."

There is only one true vine. True means "genuine" or "sincere." Christ the eternal Son is the real deal, the revealer of God in the world and now, amazingly He is your source of Eternal Life in Heaven and a meaningful life on earth.

My Father is the vinedresser [1b]: The Father, Son and Spirit act with single purpose to accomplish their goals. The vine is the plant with its roots, trunk and life giving sap. The Father is the Master Gardener who causes the maximum growth and fruitfulness for that vine.

Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away [2a]: This is where people start to go seriously astray. In this context, this cannot be made to say, "if you don't bear fruit you will be removed." It describes branches that are not connected to the vine. They are lifeless and therefore fruitless. In another place Jesus describes them with a different agricultural metaphor.

Matthew 13:24-30 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ "But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ "But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. ²⁷ "The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' ²⁸ "And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' ²⁹ "But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ 'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.'""

God will eventually take away false or dead branches. He does not expect branches to do the impossible. You cannot make yourself alive. Hanging fruit on dead branches will not make them alive. This is what many people and even churches are trying to do. Branches cannot bear fruit unless they are alive and if they are alive he will see to it that they bear fruit.

John 15:2 ² "..... every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

If you are having trials and difficulties and hardships they do not mean that God disapproves of you. It means He is working to produce more fruit. In this case that fruit is more Christlike character. More love for God and others. More peace in a hostile world. More joy in a joyless world. Being pruned is an act of loving care for you. Don't see it through the devil's eyes. See it through Christ and the Father's.

It does not even mean that God is cutting away at sin. When we have hardships most of us say, "I wonder what I did wrong?" "I wonder what God is mad at me for?" **How about nothing!** We are always sinning. Is that a surprise to God? If He had only known that you would not be the perfect Christian, He would have never wasted His time dying for your sins on the Cross? Really? Is that what you think? If it is you are wrong.

Romans 5:8 ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 4:10 ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

This is why Jesus reminds His disciples and you....

John 15:3 ³ "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

We don't get clean by doing good things, anymore than fruit on dead branches will make them live. Life is a work of God and it comes through faith or trust in His Word which says He gave Himself in your place to save you.

"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 [4]: Abide means live or remain in me. He does not say "come live in me" or "do something fruitful so that I will let you live in me." He says instead, "You are alive by my Word"...not even by your word, but by His word so now remain in me. We become Christlike in the same way we became believers in the first place. By the work of the Holy Spirit when He placed us into Christ. It is God's will for your life to rest and be at home in Christ. To know that this is the only place you belong and He will transfer His life into you. The True Vine gives life to the branches and the branches bear fruit. The Christian life is lived totally by faith apart from human works.

Colossians 2:6-7 ⁶ Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk in Him, ⁷ having been firmly rooted *and now* being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, *and* overflowing with gratitude.

"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 [5]: Paul does not say "having rooted yourself and having built yourself up and established your faith." These things are done to us by the Father through the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus gives the life giving power and ability to our transformation. God is calling you to know this and appropriate it. You need Christ in order to love your spouse and have patience with your life. You

need the Holy Spirit to change your heart through the Word of God. This is why you should stay close to Christ, His Word, His people and His heart.

Romans 12:2 ² And do not be conformed to this world, but [let yourself 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.

We all know this verse:

Philippians 4:13 ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Here it says you can do nothing apart from Christ who strengthens you. "Nothing" in verse 5 means...no Christlike fruit.

"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 [6]: If we are going to try to transform ourselves apart from humble and complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit to transform us then there will be absolutely no fruit. Again...this is descriptive. Jesus describes a life that is not attached to Him and therefore has no spiritual or eternal life. The Spirit is in the world to exalt and glorify Christ. He does that by making us alive in Christ. Attaching us to the source of all life.

Ephesians 2:4-5 ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you [7]: This is not another prosperity gospel prayer formula. It is an exhortation to believers to abandon their own self-righteous efforts at transformation and stay dependent on the life changing vine. If you need love **you should pray** and seek it humbly from God. If you need Joy, **you will not find it apart from Christ.** All attempts end the same way. Until you are attached to Christ you are a dead branch. In Christ you may pray for His transforming Grace to be at work in your life.

What is it that you wish to have from God? In this text it is a fruitful life. It is Christlike transformation into the image of God. That is His will for you. If you seek it in Christ you can ask Him and He will give it to you.

"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. [8]: God is seeking His Glory in the world. Your salvation was just the beginning.

Ephesians 1:11-14 ¹¹ also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, ¹² to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. ¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is

given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

Now God will glorify Himself through your transformation. Both are His doing. Our response in both cases is humble trust and dependence. If you have ever despaired of change in your inner man this is the solution. It is true that you cannot change, but equally true that Christ can and will change you and get Glory for Himself in the process.

CONCLUSION: None of this means that we should not try to be more like Christ. It means that there can be no success without humble dependence upon The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. Christ is telling us what they will do for us not what we must do for them.

You should read your Bible and love your spouse and seek to overcome your sin, but you will never do it without prayerfully depending on and praying to Christ. The fruit that the vine produces is obvious here. Christ is the vine. The life of the plant is Christ. The Fruit will be directly from the Eternal Life of Christ.

You should seek the Christlike life because it reveals Jesus to the world like nothing else. It also transforms you and fulfills you like nothing else. God has ordained several means or tools that He will use to transform you.

- The Word of God: You must know the thoughts of God. They are different than yours. To know His thoughts and trust in them will transform your mind.

Romans 12:2 ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,

1 Peter 2:2 ² like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

- The exalting of Jesus Christ through preaching: The Spirit delights to strip away our blindness and show us the beauty of Christ. This is a transforming sight. It is a work of God to change us.

2 Corinthians 4:5-6 ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

- The Fellowship of Brothers and Sisters in the Church: This is a powerful tool in the Spirit's arsenal. Together we serve one another in love and spur one another on toward love and good works. All of which exalts and glorifies Jesus in the world.

Hebrews 10:23-25 ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to

love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Our efforts do not change us because they cannot change us. On the other hand...If you refuse to embrace and use what God has provided for your transformation...YOU WILL NOT CHANGE! Instead we must consciously remember...we abide in the life giving presence of Jesus. We will be transformed by the renewing of our minds when we read and hear the Scripture. We can expect and pray for life changing moments when we sit under the preaching of Christ and we must consider how to help one another become like Christ within His church. Through these means we can experience the Joy of the Lord. With all these things in mind I think we can take Paul's words to the Philippians to heart....

Philippians 4:4-9 ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. ⁹ The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.