



## Abiding in Christ

*"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you . . . ." (John 15:7, NKJV).*

**T**he first eleven verses of John 15 speak almost entirely about abiding in Jesus and the benefits of doing so. These are Jesus' words as He taught His disciples immediately before His arrest and subsequent crucifixion, and He was intent on telling them some important things before the coming crisis. Jesus knew it was His last opportunity to teach them before His death. They needed to hear Him. We, too, need to hear the words of Jesus for we, like Jesus' disciples, live in critical days.

There are some benefits of abiding in Jesus and His words abiding in us. These include:

### 1. We will bear fruit.

**J**esus said, "I am the vine. You are the branches. He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit. For without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Jesus said in the preceding verse that "the branch cannot bear fruit of itself," meaning without the vine. Life flows to and through the branch from the vine.

The Greek word used for fruit in this passage is the same one used for the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. . . ." (KJV). These attributes are produced in our lives as a result of the flow of Christ's life into ours through our connectedness to Him—the vine. This is not a reference to salvation. There are many who have received Christ as savior who produce either no fruit or very little fruit of the Spirit. Remember, Jesus was teaching believers, His disciples, in our passage in John 15. And He is referring to "every branch in me . . ." (John 15:2).

### 2. The Father will be glorified.

**I**t is to the Father's glory that we bear fruit. This passage in John 15 shows the Father searching the branches. He desires that we bear fruit—even much fruit. Jesus said of the Father, ". . . every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2, RSV). My daughter planted tomatoes this year. She examined those plants almost daily. She studied and got tips on raising tomatoes. One of the things she did was pinch back the little branches she knew would produce no fruit and would only drain nourishment from the plant. God does that to us, so we will bear much fruit—to His glory.

### 3. We will experience blessing.

A tremendous blessing of abiding in Jesus and His words abiding in us is joy. Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11, KJV). Our abiding in Him makes it possible for His joy to abide in us and for our joy to be full.

**A**nother blessing is how the presence of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives makes our lives beautiful. Not only is God glorified by our fruitfulness and not only is the world made a better place, but **we** experience "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22, NIV). This personal benefit is often our first thought when we discuss the fruit of the Spirit. Jesus, however, had the order correct—God first glorified, then our blessing.

There are several negative results of not abiding in Jesus and not having His Words abiding in us. I will briefly discuss only one.

**We will experience cutting off and withering.**

**J**esus declared that every branch in Him that bears no fruit the Father “taketh away” (John 15:2 KJV). In verse 6, Jesus said, “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” Some might say these people lost their salvation. However, I do not believe a lack of fruitfulness is a matter of salvation. I believe it is a matter of experiencing great loss in our lives. Jesus warned His closest disciples to remain in Him and His words in them.

In Matthew 5:13 Jesus said: “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men” (*NIV*). Jesus also said, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16, *NIV*).

**I**n both this passage and in John, we see the terrible plight of the person who produces no fruit, who loses their saltiness or who hides their light. God is not glorified, the kingdom of God is not benefitted and the person experiences withering, being cast into the fire, and trampling. This does not depict a life of victory over sin, the flesh, the devil or really over much of anything. It certainly does not depict the abundant life that Jesus came that we might have (John 10:10).

Let me interject a word of hope and encouragement: since we know all things are possible with God, this situation is not irreparable—thanks to God’s mercy, grace and His power to restore and renew. Lives can be changed.

**I**n today’s Scripture passage, the Greek word translated *abide* could just as well have been translated *remain* or *dwell*. In other places in Scripture the same Greek word is used to mean “to endure” or “to last,” “to persevere,” “to stand firm or steadfast,” “to remain alive,” “to wait for.” This means we stand firm when troubles come, when we are tempted to doubt, when people attack us. This does not mean we are perfect, but we are to live in Him ongoing, to remain in Him even when we

don’t understand all that’s going on in our lives or all God may be doing or not seem to be doing. We must remain firm, steadfast and persevering in our connection with Him.

Jesus’ instruction about His words abiding in us can be a help in our abiding in Him. Paul wrote: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom . . .” (Colossians 3:16, *KJV*). We can do this by meditating on specific verses and passages and by memorizing the Word. We can pray for the Holy Spirit’s instruction about His Word. The second part of Colossians 3:16 says, “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. . . .” These are songs that focus on God and His Word. We should read it, speak it, sing it, talk about it, teach it, tell it—not just a little. Richly means abundantly. We should honor it with our hearts as well as our lips. Having Christ’s words abiding in us is a condition of receiving from God the abundance of life that rightfully is ours as God’s children.

**L**astly, the second part of John 15:7 reveals yet another blessing: “. . . ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (*KJV*). In verse 16, Jesus said, “. . . that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (*KJV*). One more wonderful reason to abide in Jesus. **SH**

GOD’S WORD FOR TODAY

Teaching Letter 17

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