

The Vine and the Branches

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this evening, for a short while, if we could, turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. The Gospel according to John, chapter 15.
- John chapter 15. And if we just read again at verses 1 and 2. John 15, from the beginning. Where Jesus says, 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 does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. And so on. John Duncan, who is probably better known for his nickname.
- You've all heard the nickname Rabbi Duncan. And Rabbi Duncan, he was given such a name because of his concern to bring the Gospel to the Jews. And he later served as a professor of Hebrew and Old Testament studies in the Free Church College in Edinburgh.
- [1 : 1 6] And in fact, Rabbi Duncan was one of the founding fathers of the Free Church. And he was held in high regard by many of his fellow ministers. And he was held in high regard by the church as a whole.
- And he was one of the great minds of his generation. And he sought to defend all these repeated attacks that were being made upon the church from all these different angles.
- And one thought which arose and came out of the Enlightenment period, and that plagued the mindset of many people, was the identity of Jesus Christ.
- Because during the Enlightenment period, everyone was asking the question, Who is Jesus? Who is this Jesus?
- And you know, many of the Enlightenment thinkers, then and many since, they claimed that Jesus was just a great teacher with great morals. He was a good man. But he was nothing more than that.
- [2 : 1 6] And they said, whoever Jesus was, he certainly wasn't God. But Rabbi Duncan, in his own winsome way, he made it quite plain that there could be no other explanation as to the identity of Jesus, other than him being the Son of God.
- Because Rabbi Duncan, he said, Jesus Christ either deceived mankind by conscious fraud, or he was himself deluded, or he was divine.
- He either deceived mankind by conscious fraud, or he was himself deluded, or he was in fact divine. Years later, the Christian apologist, C.S. Lewis, he simplified Rabbi Duncan's statement by saying, Jesus is either a liar, a lunatic, or he is Lord.
- He's a liar, a lunatic, or he is Lord. And that's a question which we all have to answer. Who is Jesus? Is he a liar? Is he a lunatic?
- Or is he Lord? And if he is Lord, is he your Lord? Is he Lord over your life? Who is Jesus? A liar, a lunatic, or is he Lord?
- [3 : 3 2] And that's the question, you know, which surrounds John's Gospel. Who is this Jesus? Called the Christ. Who is he? And why did he come? Who is this Jesus?

And this is one of the great themes of John's Gospel, because John wants to reveal to us the identity of Jesus. He wants us to know who Jesus is. And we have to know who Jesus is, in order to understand why he had to go to the cross.

Because without knowing the identity of Jesus, the cross becomes meaningless. Without knowing the identity of Jesus, as God's only begotten son, God's beloved son, without knowing his identity, the Gospel doesn't actually make any sense.

And so John emphasizes to us that the person who died upon the cross to save sinners was in fact the eternal son of God.

And all the time John is saying to us, that's what makes the cross of Jesus Christ so unique. That's what makes the Gospel so unique. Because without knowing the identity of Jesus as the only begotten son of the Father, then the cross doesn't make any sense.

[4 : 46] The Gospel becomes irrelevant. If Jesus was a liar and a lunatic, then there's no Gospel to proclaim. No Gospel to proclaim.

If Jesus was only a good man with a good philosophy for life, then we're just wasting our time here this evening. If Jesus is not God's son, if Jesus is not God, then his life in this world is of little benefit to any of us here tonight.

And his death is completely meaningless. But you know, John is eager to tell us who this Jesus really is. And he makes no bones about it.

Because John says that the reason he wants us to know the identity of Jesus is so that we will believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing in him, we will have life in his name.

John wants us to be a Christian. He just puts it out there. He wants us to be a Christian. And he wants us to love Jesus and follow Jesus and live our lives for Jesus.

[5 : 55] John wants us to be a Christian. And he emphasizes this by drawing our attention to these seven I am sayings of Jesus. And we considered one of them this morning when we looked at the divine shepherd, where Jesus said, I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. But this evening, I'd like us to consider the seventh and the last I am saying of Jesus, where Jesus says in verse one, I am the true vine and my Father is the vine dresser.

But when we follow the illustration which Jesus is giving to us, he's describing for us in this passage, he describes for us what a Christian is.

John wants us to be a Christian. And he's now using this chapter to portray to us what a Christian is. And that's a question I'd like us to ask this evening. What is a Christian?

What is a Christian? And in this passage, I believe that Jesus is teaching us three things about what a Christian is. Because John says that a Christian, or Jesus says, a Christian is connected, a Christian is cultivated, and a Christian is committed.

[7 : 18] There's the word. A Christian is connected, a Christian is cultivated, and a Christian is committed. So we look first of all at a Christian is connected.

What is a Christian? A Christian is connected. We'll read again in verse one. Where Jesus says, I am the true vine, my Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away.

And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch, and withers.

And the branches are gathered, and thrown into the fire, and burned. Now, the metaphor of the vine tree is one in which the disciples of Jesus would have been very, very familiar with.

[8 : 28] They could easily relate to what Jesus is talking about here. Not only because Israel had many vineyards, and it was, and it still is, a large manufacturer and distributor of wine.

But also because when we follow the sequence of this passage, where we are in John 15, Jesus and his disciples, they have now left the upper room. The last words of John 14 talk about Jesus saying, Rise, let us go from here.

And they were in the upper room, and it was in the upper room that Jesus had washed the disciples' feet. It was there that Jesus had instituted the Lord's Supper for the first time. And now, having left the upper room, they are now making their way towards the Garden of Gethsemane.

But in order to get to the Garden of Gethsemane, their route would have taken them along the pathways around the Mount of Olives. And along those pathways were vineyards.

Vineyards were everywhere. They were all around them. One commentator says that Israel was just a land of vineyards. And even the name Gethsemane, that's where they were going, to the Garden of Gethsemane.

[9 : 39] The name Gethsemane means wine press. And so we can see where Jesus gets his illustration from about what it means to be a Christian.

But you know, when we think about it, there must have been more than just the physical surroundings of Israel on the mind of Jesus when he claims, I am the true vine.

Because I believe that when Jesus uttered this I am statement, he's drawing our attention to all these passages in the Old Testament, especially the Psalms which we were singing.

All these Psalms which refer to vineyards. And the Jews were always conscious of the fact that the imagery of the vineyard, it was repeatedly used to portray God's relationship with his people, Israel.

In which the vineyard, it depicts the Lord's people, Israel, who were God's people. They belonged to God. They were his vineyard. And that's what we were singing about in our Psalms this evening.

[10 : 43] The illustration about God's people being this vine. Our opening item of praise in Psalm 128, we sang about the vine and we were told that the mothers in Israel, they were described as vines.

They were vines which were to bring forth fruit of God's covenant faithfulness. The next generation. They were the vine and through them blessing would come.

And also in Psalm 80, we sang about the description of Israel being a vine. And the Israelites were this vine which was uprooted out of the land of Egypt, out of, you could say, transplanted out of slavery and bondage in Egypt and then replanted in the land of Canaan, the promised land.

And what the psalmist in Psalm 80 reminded us was that from this central vine, Israel, the branches of Israel, Israel's vine trees were meant to spread all over the world.

That was the psalmist's prayer where he's pleading for blessing, pleading for revival, pleading for the blessing of the Lord to spread out to all the nations.

[11 : 53] That was his vision. That was his longing that the Lord would visit this vine, Israel, and make it fruitful so that the message of God's salvation would spread to the ends of the earth.

And so when we look at these Old Testament Psalms about Israel being the vine of God's people and then we feed it into this I Am statement of Jesus, it should make us see even more clearly why Jesus came.

Because as we know, the nation of Israel failed to serve the Lord. They failed to be the fruitful vine. that they were called to be. They failed to spread their branches out so that the other nations of the earth would be blessed.

Because Israel became so proud and so obsessed with self that they refused to spread their branches of blessing to the other nations of the world.

They cut themselves off. But because of Israel's disobedience the Lord revealed a new and a living way through Jesus that all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

[13 : 02] And that's why Jesus steps forward at this point surrounded by vineyards en route towards Calvary. He's only hours away from his trial and crucifixion in which he will display his great love by laying down his life for his friends.

And then Jesus steps forward before his disciples and he says to them all I am the true vine. I am the true vine and my father is the vine dresser.

He has sent me to do his will and the will of the father is for me to be the true Israel. Israel of old they failed to be the vine but I am the true vine and through me blessing will come to all the nations of the earth.

I am the true vine that will remain obedient to my father's will and give my life as a ransom for many. And he's saying I am the true vine. Everyone who abides in me will have eternal life.

And Jesus says down in verse 5 I am the vine you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him he it is that bears much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing.

[14 : 16] And with this Jesus is calling us to see that without being connected to the vine the branches are useless. Without the vine we can do nothing.

We can do nothing. Without the vine we can't bear fruit. Without the vine we are unfruitful. Without knowing Jesus and being connected to Jesus and abiding in Jesus and depending upon Jesus we will remain unfaithful and unfruitful.

Without being connected to the true vine says Jesus you are dead. That is what he said. Without being connected to the vine you are dead.

And what do you do with a dead branch? Well Jesus tells us in verse 6 if anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers and the branches are gathered thrown into the fire and burned.

They are burned. And the place where dead branches were taken to be burned was where all the rubbish of the city of Jerusalem was taken.

[15 : 28] It was taken to a place outside Jerusalem to a dumping ground that was continually burning day and night. And because Jesus and his disciples because they had left the upper room they are now walking round the Mount of Olives towards the Garden of Gethsemane they would have seen this dumping ground around the south side of the city.

They would have seen it in the distance. The smoke rising up. They might even have smelt the stench that would come from it because it was continually burning. And the Jews they used to call this burning dumping ground.

They called it Gehenna. That's what they called it. Gehenna. And you know it's interesting that they called it that because that's the word which Jesus often used to describe hell.

That's the word he used. He used the word Gehenna because it describes the continual burning of this wasteland.

And as Jesus says in Mark chapter 9, Gehenna is the place where the fire is not quenched. And so what Jesus is saying here is that if you're not abiding in the true vine, if you're not connected to the true vine, you're dead.

[16 : 41] You're a dead branch. And if you're a dead branch, then there will come a day when you are gathered up to be burned. But my friend, the reason Jesus uses this vivid illustration is to make us see the importance of being connected to the true vine.

It's to make us see the importance of abiding in Jesus and resting in Jesus and trusting in Jesus. It makes us see the importance of doing something about it and making sure that we are connected to the true vine.

Now, I'm not much of a gardener, as you probably know already. I'm not much of a bird watcher. I told you that the other day and I'm not much of a gardener. So I don't have much going for me. But I've always found the engrafting process with vine trees, I've always found it really, really interesting.

Where a branch is able to be cut from one vine tree and then engrafted into another vine tree. And it's said that the engrafting process is extremely difficult and only a number of people can actually do it and make it work properly.

Because it's said that, I looked it up, in the process of engrafting a branch into a vine tree, the vine tree is, first of all, it has to receive this deep cut right through its thin trunk.

[18 : 07] And then once the trunk is cut, some of the life-giving sap, it's drawn out and it's drained out in order to make way for this engrafted branch.

And when the branch is to be engrafted, it's firmly just pushed through this slit through the trunk and then it's knotted or tied on the other side. And when the trunk of the vine tree, when it's closed over and it's sealed with the sap, it's so that once it's all sealed, after a few days, this life-giving sap, it begins to fill the engrafted branch and the branch begins to grow.

And you know, thinking about the engrafting process, the engrafting of a branch, it's a beautiful picture of what happens when someone becomes a Christian.

Because when someone becomes a Christian, they're like a branch which is cut. And they're cut from the vine tree, let's say, the vine tree of Adam. Where they're born as a branch in Adam.

Connected to Adam, rooted in Adam, and in Adam they have nothing but sin in their life, death and unfruitfulness and unfaithfulness. But when someone becomes a Christian, they're cut from the vine tree of Adam, and then they're engrafted into the vine tree of Christ.

[19 : 33] Where Christ is wounded, wounded in order to provide this life-giving sap to an engrafted branch. And once the engrafted branch is united to the true vine, Jesus Christ, there is new life, and there is fruitfulness.

And my friend, that's what this true vine is in the business of doing. That's what Jesus is in the business of doing. He's in the business of giving new life to dead branches.

That's what Jesus wants to do. He wants to give new life to dead branches. And what Jesus is telling us is that there is only true life when we are connected to and abiding in the true vine.

There's only true life when we are in union with the true vine, Jesus Christ. Christ. Because as branches, we all need to be united to Christ by faith.

Without the vine, says Jesus, you can do nothing. We can't bear fruit. Without me, you can do nothing. Without the vine, we are unfruitful. And so we need to be connected to Jesus.

[20 : 43] We need to be abiding in Jesus. We need to be depending upon Jesus for our salvation. salvation. Because in doing so, we will draw our nourishment and our nutrition from this vine, Jesus Christ.

And so when we ask, what is a Christian? A Christian is connected. A Christian is united to Jesus Christ by faith. A Christian is in union with Christ.

A union, as we know, with marriages when two people become one. And that's what happens when someone is in union with Christ. They and all the other Christians, they are one in Christ.

What is a Christian? A Christian is connected. But secondly, we see, we can ask the question again, what is a Christian? A Christian is cultivated. A Christian is cultivated.

If you read verses 1 and 2 again, he says, I am the true vine, my father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

[21 : 57] So once a branch has been grafted into the true vine and is being nurtured from the true vine, Jesus shows us here that the branch needs to be cultivated.

In other words, it needs to be worked on. The work has begun, but it needs to be brought on. And as every good gardener knows, a beautiful garden just doesn't appear from nowhere.

In order to produce a beautiful garden, it needs a lot of attention and it needs a lot of work. The plants and the land need to be developed and nurtured and enriched in order to produce more and more fruit.

But Jesus makes clear that cultivation cannot take place unless we are first of all connected to the vine. Christians can't be developed and enriched unless they are truly united to the vine.

You know, the language which Jesus is repeatedly using in this passage, it's the language of possession and belonging. Where the branches, those who are Christians, they've been engrafted into the true vine and they're abiding in the vine.

[23 : 12] They're connected to the true vine. They're depending upon the true vine for their life and vitality. But more than that, says Jesus, because they belong to the true vine.

They're possessed by the true vine and they're in union with the true vine. And just as the sap in the vine nurtures and sustains the branches and produces fruit, so too this union with Christ for the Christian.

It's a key part to their spiritual growth, vitality and development. But for all that to happen, every branch must be in the vine.

In the vine. And what you'll have probably noticed as we read in this passage is how many times Jesus uses the word in. He says, every branch in me, abide in me.

If you abide in me, my words will abide in you. Abide in my love. And although it's only a small word, in. We said this morning, large doors swing on small hinges.

[24 : 21] And when it comes to the Bible, major theological truths swing on small words. And that's what we see again here. Because the word in, it's significant.

Because it explains to us the union which a Christian has with Jesus Christ. And this is also something which the Apostle Paul, he often picks up on this in his letters.

Because when you read Paul's letters, you'll often find that Paul is always speaking about union with Christ. He's always talking about our union with Jesus. He says that we are in Christ.

We are in Christ. He says there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ. We are a new creature in Christ. The old has passed away.

All has become new. We are his workmanship in Christ Jesus. And so a Christian is someone who is in Christ. They are united to Christ.

[25 : 18] And because they are united to Christ, all the blessings of salvation flow from that union. And when we are in Christ, we are in union with Christ. And we're loved.

We're nurtured. We're fed. We're cared for. We are protected. And you know, that's the beauty of salvation in Jesus Christ. That's the beauty of it.

When we are in Christ, we have all the blessings. Every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. Christ. And you know, it makes me wonder why anyone wouldn't want to be a Christian.

Why wouldn't you want to be a Christian if that's what's offered to you? If you're offered eternal life, you're offered justification before a holy God, you're offered sanctification to be made more like Jesus, you're offered glorification the day you die.

when everything is brought to an end. You're promised all these things. Why would you not want to be a Christian? You're offered forgiveness of sins.

[26 : 23] Why would you rather remain a dead branch that will one day be gathered up and just thrown into hell? Why would you want that instead of being a fruitful branch that abides in the vine?

Why would you rather remain disconnected and uncultivated than one which is kept and cared for by the vine dresser?

And you know, that's what Jesus shows us here. It's the vine dresser who does all the work. It's the vine dresser who looks after both the vine and the branches. And what Jesus is showing us is that when a branch is engrafted into the vine, there's not only union with him, there's also union with his father.

We're adopted into this relationship with the father. We are made sons and daughters of the father. And you remember when John writes his first letter to the churches and he considers the cross and he says, behold what manner of love is this.

The father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons and daughters of God. And what Jesus wants us to be absolutely clear on is that it's because of his love that the father tends to the branches which are engrafted into the true vine.

[27 : 52] It's because of his love that the vine dresser works in our lives in order to bring us on and develop us and cultivate us so that we will bear more fruit.

But Jesus also tells us here that there are two types of branch which his father, the vine dresser, works on. Because the vine dresser tends to the branches which don't bear fruit and he tends to the branches which do bear fruit.

And what Jesus wants us to see is that the father's care and concern is for both. He cares for both. And he says in verse 2, Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away.

And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Jesus tells us that the branch which does not bear fruit, he says the vine dresser takes it away.

Now the phrase used here, takes it away, it has often caused a lot of problems. Because this phrase, it's usually applied to verse 6, where it says in verse 6, If anyone does not abide in me and he is thrown away like a branch and withers, and the branches are gathered and thrown into the fire and burned.

[29 : 10] And so the conclusion which some people come to when they put verse 2 and verse 6 together is that if we are unfruitful and unfaithful Christians and if we are of no use to God, then we will be cut off from the true vine and cast into hell.

If we are not a genuine article, which is what we all worry about, if we are not a genuine article, when it all comes to the end, God will just cut us off and send us to hell.

And some people conclude that an unfruitful branch equates to just a dead branch, which needs to be burned. But that also raises a lot of other questions, like does our salvation depend upon how faithful and how fruitful we are as Christians?

Does our salvation and our union with Christ depend upon how much we do for the Lord? And of course the answer is no. Our salvation and our engrafting into Christ is not dependent upon us.

It's solely dependent upon trusting in the finished work of Jesus. And once you're engrafted into Christ, once you're in union with Christ, once you're committed to Christ, once you become a Christian, you cannot be cut off.

[30 : 24] You can't break the union which Jesus has made through his blood. Because that union, that connection with Jesus, it's an inseparable union which can't be broken.

And so if the branch that doesn't bear fruit can't be removed from the vine, what happens to it? Well the phrase takes it away, it can also be translated as takes it up.

And that's the way we should read it, in the sense of lifting it up, lifting it up and looking after it. And when we understand it in that sense, the image which we're given is of a branch which is, you could say a branch that is drooping down, not looking its best, and it's not producing fruit as it ought to be.

But the response of the vine dresser isn't one of, well look at this branch, cut it off and get rid of it. The branch isn't just cut off and thrown into the fire to be burned.

The image is of the vine dresser and it's an image of tender care and concern for the unfruitful branch. And I believe that Jesus is showing us the care which the Father has towards Christians which are not at their best.

[31 : 41] And instead of thinking that the vine dresser seeks to get rid of them, Jesus says the divine dresser seeks to lift them up and encourage them and help them along that they might bear more fruit.

And you know, as branches that are connected to the true vine, as Christians, it's very easy to become stunted in our growth and fruitfulness.

It's very easy to become lax in our Christianity. And these things might take place because of knocks to our faith or worries because of illness or heartache because of death or even the busyness of life.

These things that just crowd into our life and crowd out the importance of following the true vine and trusting the true vine. And you know, it can happen that we grow cold in our walk with the Lord and lose sight of the importance of the vine.

There are many possible reasons as to why a branch might stop bearing fruit. But the wonder of the vine dresser is that he doesn't come with a heavy hand and tear the weak branch apart.

[32 : 57] He comes with this tender loving hand to lift us up. To provide support under us. To lift us up again so that we will be strengthened and nourished and supported and cultivated by the true vine.

That's what it is for a branch that's drooping down that seems fruitless. But you know, Jesus, he not only speaks about the branch that doesn't bear fruit, he also mentions what happens to the branch that does bear fruit.

And Jesus says that the branch which does bear fruit, it's pruned by the vine dresser so that it may bear more fruit. And what we're often tempted to think is that pruning takes place because of unfaithfulness and unfruitfulness.

But that's not necessarily the case. Because Jesus says that the faithful and fruitful branch is pruned.

But the unfaithful and the unfruitful branch, it's lifted up and cared for. But the faithful and fruitful branch, it's pruned so that it will bring forth more fruit and more faithfulness.

[34 : 13] Of course, the Christian life isn't about how much fruit you can produce. It's about faithfulness. Is that not what we're told in the parable of the talents?

For those who had increased in their number of talents, the master didn't say to them, well done, thou good and fruitful servant. No, he told them, well done, thou good and faithful servant.

And that's what Jesus is showing us here. That the Christian life isn't so much about fruitfulness. It's about faithfulness. Because it's faithfulness that produces fruitfulness.

It's faithfulness that produces fruitfulness. And faithfulness is required even throughout the pruning process. And pruning in whatever form it may come into our lives, it's not a joyous experience.

It's often a painful experience where we're cut back or knocked down or even broken. But we must always be aware that the pruning of the vine dresser, it's done in love for us.

[35 : 22] It's done in love. And it comes into our experience in order to increase our faithfulness and to produce in us more faithfulness and ultimately more fruitfulness.

And the pruning of the Lord, it can come in many, many different ways in order for us to respond in faithfulness to him. And you know, that's what the writer to the Hebrews reminds the Lord's people.

They were, the writer to the Hebrews, he was reminding or writing to a church that was being persecuted for their faith. They were being pruned through persecution. And in Hebrews chapter 12, he says, My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord.

And don't be discouraged when you're rebuked by him. For the Lord loves those whom he chastens. Now, no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful.

Nevertheless, afterwards, he says, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. My friend, a Christian is pruned in order to increase in faithfulness and fruitfulness.

[36 : 34] A Christian is cut back in order to grow and develop further. A Christian is cultivated in order to bring glory to God.

That's what we're told in verse 8. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. A Christian is cultivated because it's all part of the love and care of the fatherly vinedresser.

And so what is a Christian? A Christian is connected. Connected and engrafted into the vine. A Christian is cultivated. We're pruned, taught, lifted up by the vinedresser.

But lastly and briefly, a Christian is committed. A Christian is committed. Look at verse 9. He says, As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Abide in my love. 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. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

[37 : 46] And so in order to be a Christian, commitment is required. The commitment which is required is something which Jesus has repeatedly mentioned throughout this passage.

Because Jesus has repeatedly used the word abide. Abide, abide, abide. In fact, the word abide appears nine times in this chapter.

Where Jesus is saying from verse 4, 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. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. Abide. And it goes on down to the verse marked 10. Abide in me and I in you.

Abide, abide, abide. Abide. My friend, a Christian is someone who abides in the true vine, Jesus Christ. But what does it mean to abide in Christ?

[38 : 46] What is it, how do we abide in Jesus Christ? And you know, I was asking that same question 11 years ago.

The same question. That's the question I was asking when I was seeking the Lord. When I wanted to be a committed Christian, that's the question I was asking.

What does it mean to abide in Christ? And I'm sure that I've said to you before that this passage is, this passage in John 15, it was instrumental in my conversion.

But when I first read these words, I wasn't too sure what the word abide meant. And so I looked it up in the dictionary and the dictionary definition of the word abide was remain faithful to.

remain faithful to. And when I understood what the word abide meant, I read the passage again. Went through John 15, verses 1 to 17 again.

[39 : 45] And every time I came across the word abide, I replaced it with the phrase remain faithful to. And when I did that, I discovered that Jesus was repeatedly saying, remain faithful to me and I will remain faithful to you.

Remain faithful to me and I will remain faithful to you. And my friend, that's the promise of the true vine, Jesus Christ. That's the promise and the assurance which Jesus gives to us that if we abide in him, he will abide in us.

If we remain faithful to him, he will remain faithful to us. If we are committed to him, he will commit himself to us. And this through vine, he was committed.

And he is committed to his people because he was committed all the way to Calvary. He was faithful and obedient to the will of his Father. He was faithful and obedient and committed to his people.

He was faithful and obedient and committed to all his promises. Faithful, obedient and committed to death, even the death of the cross. But why was he faithful, obedient and committed?

[40 : 58] Because as he says in verse 13, greater love is no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends, you are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you.

Greater love. And you know the commandment, the commandment is a call to commitment. The commandment, greater love is no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you. The commandment is a call to commitment. Jesus is calling us to be committed. He's not calling us to be half-hearted in our Christianity.

He's calling us to be committed Christians who are committed to reading our Bibles, committed to praying. I know it's very difficult to do.

I know it's hard to find time, but we have to do it. Committed. Committed in our Christian witness. Committed in our workplace. Committed in our church attendance.

[41 : 58] Committed in the prayer meeting. Committed in learning and developing and growing. Committed to loving one another as Christ has loved us. We are to be committed by abiding in the true vine, by resting in this true vine, by trusting in the true vine, Jesus Christ.

My friend, this Jesus gave his life for us. He gave his life. The least we can do is be committed to him.

The least we can do is give him all we've got. The least we can do is be committed to him and to his cause. We need to be committed.

We need to be committed to this true vine, Jesus Christ. But for those who are still uncommitted, you know, I sometimes wonder if it's the fear of commitment that holds you back from becoming a Christian.

Where the fear of commitment and the thought of committing your life to Jesus Christ, maybe that's what keeps you back. Maybe because you worry that you might not remain committed.

[43 : 13] Or you worry that you won't last. You worry that you won't continue to the end. but you have to read the promise. You have to read the promise again and again.

He says, abide in me and I in you. Abide in me and I in you. And let me tell you from my own experience, the promise is true.

The promise is true. Abide in me and I in you. Remain faithful to me and I will remain faithful to you. Commit your life to me and I will commit my life to you.

That's the promise. Abide in me and I in you. What greater promise, what greater encouragement from the Lord do you need in order to become a Christian?

What greater promise do you need than the promise abide in me and I in you? So what is a Christian? A Christian is connected, a Christian is cultivated and a Christian is committed.

[44 : 23] A Christian is committed. And so for those of you who are not committed, is it not about time that you committed your life to this true vine, Jesus Christ?

Because his promise to you tonight is abide in me and I in you. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray.

O Lord, we bless thee and we praise thee that Jesus is the true vine and we thank thee that he engrafts poor branches like ourselves into his vine and Lord, we pray that thou wouldest continue to engraft more, that more would abide in thee and more that thou wouldest abide in them, that they would trust in thee, the one who promises never to leave us, never to forsake us, the one who promises us every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.

O Lord, we give thanks to thee for the wonder and glory of who Jesus is, that he says to us that greater love hath no man than this, that a man laid down his life for his friends, that you are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you.

Help us Lord to follow the command to come and abide in Christ. O Lord, bless us in the week that lies ahead, a week that is unknown to us but known to thee.

[45 : 57] Help us to cast every care upon thee for thou art the one who does care for us. Bless us in our fellowship this evening and we pray that everything that is said and done on this thine own day would be to thy glory, to the furtherance of thy kingdom and to lift up the name of Jesus a name that is so precious to us.

Go before us then we ask for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake. Amen. We shall conclude by singing the words of Psalm 51 Psalm 51 page 281 Psalm 51 we're singing from verse 7 down to the verse marked 13 Psalm 51 from verse 7 Bibleikut Spain diode 13 Psalm 51 Irish Isaiah Padua Do thou with his love sprinkle me, I shall be cleansed all.

Yea, wash thou me, and then I shall be whiter than the snow.

Of gladness and of joyfulness make me to hear the voice.

That for these very bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

[47 : 58] All mine iniquities brought out thy face, thy throne, my sin.

Create a clean heart for renew, arise with me within.

Cast me not from thy sight nor take thy holy spirit away.

Restore me thy salvation's joy, with thy peace with me save.

Then will I teach thy wisdom to those that transgressors be.

[49 : 12] And those that sinners shall then be turned unto thee.

Amen. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.