

Abide in Christ

"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 it so 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, so 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, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." John 15:1-5

The moment we were born of the Spirit, God grafted us into Jesus Christ (Romans 11:16-24). When God grafted us into His Holy Son, He also severed our spiritual connection to Satan by removing our unholy sinful nature (Romans 6:6; Colossians 2:11). Now that God has planted us in Christ, our responsibility is to abide in Christ by faith. Jesus Christ said, "Abide in Me and I in you." This is both a command and a promise. If you abide in Christ, He will abide in you. The Greek word for abide is *meno*, which means "to actively dwell in." This can also be expressed as "stay rooted in" or "remain united to."

As with all of God's promises, this one is also conditional upon the obedience of our faith. If you stay united to Christ by faith, He will remain united to you and you will bear spiritual fruit. However, if you do not stay rooted in Christ, you will not bear spiritual fruit. Therefore, whether your spiritual grafting into Christ takes hold and bears fruit depends on whether you "hold fast" by faith to Jesus Christ (Luke 8:15; 1 Corinthians 15:2; Hebrews 3:14). It is vital that we stay rooted by faith to Christ because we have no spiritual life in ourselves apart from Christ. Without Christ's life, we cannot bear His fruit. This is why Jesus told His disciples, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves (John 6:53).

Most Christians do not understand what it means to "abide in Christ." Many think that they automatically abide in Christ as long as they have been saved. However if a Christian practices sin, the Bible says this is not true. "No one who abides in Him continues to sin; no one who continues to sin has seen Him or known Him (1 John 3:6)." We cannot abide in Christ unless we abide in the truth of His word. Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly My disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free (John 8:31-32)." Therefore, we can abide in Christ's life and bear His fruit only if we believe and act on the truth. What is the foundational truth of Christian living? We can only abide (*live*) in Christ if we know that we have *died* in Christ. We must believe and act on the truth that our sinful nature has died in Christ and been removed in Christ (Romans 6:3-11). Otherwise, we will try to bear spiritual fruit by the best of our natural ability and mistake our self-effort for faith. When we try to bear spiritual fruit by our self-effort, we cut ourselves off from the spiritual life of the vine, which is Christ (Galatians 3:3; 5:4). Just as we could not crucify ourselves, we cannot sanctify ourselves apart from Christ's completed work on the cross. We will only experience Christ's resurrection life if we abide (stay rooted by faith) in Christ's death. "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him (Romans 6:8)." This is the way abiding in Christ works. When we stay rooted by faith in the truth of Christ's death (when Christ died, we died with Him), Christ's life will be formed in us. "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory (Colossians 3:3-4)."

As we abide in Christ, the Bible says that God will periodically prune us so we can bear more fruit and grow into Christ's fullness. How does God prune us? Once again, He uses His Word. To paraphrase and adapt Hebrews 4:12, "The Word of God is living and active and sharper than any pruning shears and able to cut away

everything which is carnal and soulish from our lives." Sometimes we will turn away from worldly attitudes and activities when God's Word convicts us. Other times, God uses difficult situations to discipline and prune us. "But God disciplines us for our good, so we may share His holiness (Hebrews 12:10)." When we are being pruned, we may not understand what God is doing since His pruning can be painful. At times, we may feel as if God has pruned us so far back that we are left with only a stump. However, when God causes the new growth of Christ's life to emerge within us, we will reap the fruit of abiding in Christ and His completed work on the cross. "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 (Hebrews 12:11)."

Being pruned by our heavenly Father can be painful, but it is far better to undergo His training in righteousness than to bear no fruit at all. "If you are not disciplined... then you are illegitimate children and not true sons (Hebrews 12:8)." These are people who were once grafted into Christ (John 15:2), but they proved themselves unworthy of being God's children because they resisted His divine pruning and never bore any spiritual fruit. Jesus said, "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 (John 15:6; see also Romans 11:20-22)."

God has grafted us into His Son. This is our glorious salvation and just the beginning of God's pruning and sanctifying work in our life. Let us then be diligent to stay rooted by faith in Jesus Christ and in the power of His death so that the power of His life might bear much fruit in us.

"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples... you did not choose Me but I choose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain." John 15:8 & 16