

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Abiding in the Vine, Part 2

Scripture: John 15:5-8, 11

Code: 1553

Turn in your Bibles to the 15th chapter of John for our lesson this morning. And today we continue what is part two of Abiding in the Vine. Our first message dealt with verses 1, 2, and 3 and was merely detailing the parts of the analogy verses 4 to 11 goes into even more detail in talking about the various aspects and all the ramifications. And so this morning we come to part two of Abiding in the Vine.

Recently I was reading in a book and I was reading this testimony by a woman. It said this. Two ladies were asked to visit a neighbor who was sick and in trouble. They went to the home and found the poor man pacing the floor and groaning. "We have come to help you," they said. He replied, "It is too late. I once attended your meetings two years ago. The Spirit spoke in my heart and told me to go to the altar, to plead to God for mercy, to accept His salvation, and I refused. It happened again and I refused and finally the Spirit left me and I am as much lost as though I were in Hell already. It is too late, I am going to Hell." The little article said he lived two weeks and his house was a place of darkness and devils until he died.

That's a tragic incident. It's an incident that is repeated commonly around the world. It is an incident of an opportunity to respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as directed by the Holy Spirit and to refuse that, and by resistance the Spirit of God, Who will not always strive with man departs and the man is damned. There was another man who did the very same thing, only his opportunities were even greater than this man of whom I read. His name was Judas. He walked for three years with Jesus, saw everything there was to see, heard everything there was to hear, and walked away, a devil. An ungrateful, money-hungry betrayer, who wound up a suicide smashed on the rocks and for all eternity went to hell, his own place, the Bible calls it.

The greatest tragedy in existence is the tragedy of the Judas disciple, the one who is around the truth of Jesus Christ, the one who makes a superficial attachment to Jesus Christ, then at some point moves away and is damned. Now as we approach John 15, Jesus is in the Upper Room. And He has in His mind, two types of disciples, the eleven before Him who are real disciples and that one who has gone to betray Him, the Judas disciple. And in thinking through these two disciples, He draws this beautiful analogy of the vine and the branches. And He is the vine and the Father is the Vine Dresser and the branches are would-be disciples, some of them are real, some of them are Judas branches. And He tells us that you can tell the real branches because they all bear fruit and they please the Father and they obey and they continue in love and they remain and you can tell the Judas branches

because they're only temporary and pretty soon they leave and they never have any fruit.

Now in our first message we looked at verses 1, 2, and 3 and we saw this basic introduction of the analogy. Then we began last week as we came to verse 4 to see Jesus moves to a plea, and the plea is, in verse 4, "Abide in Me and I will abide (or remain) in you." Jesus then is primarily speaking to that would-be superficial disciple and saying be a for-real one. Don't be the tragedy of Judas all over again. The primary direction of those words at the beginning of verse 4 is to that Judas branch, that professing Christian to be a true Christian, really saved and really abiding. And then we saw last week how He repeats the same thing in different words in verses 8, 9, and 10. He says, bear much fruit, continue in My Love, abide in My love by keeping my commandments. All of those are the same kind of directives going to the would-be disciple who's not real. They are directives to that Judas branch to be legitimate, the plea from the heart of Christ to go against that terrible tragedy of being around Jesus and being near Jesus but not being saved. And so what we have then is Jesus presenting two types of disciples in the branches, One branch is a true disciple, one is a false. One branch is saved and one is lost, although they both on the surface appear to be real disciples, they're not. And so Jesus is calling out, pleading with the false disciple to be for real.

Then I told you also last week that as a secondary thought, the term "abide in Me" could also be to a Christian. Now in a positional sense we do abide in Christ ... that is the character of being saved. There's no doubt about that, we are abiding in Christ. But there's a sense in which this can speak to us because it's possible as a Christian even to have those kind of exceptions when we fail to abide fully as we ought to--when we sin, when we kind of go our own way and for a day, an hour or a week or whatever it may be, we go against the principle of abiding, even though in a positional sense we are saved and we do abide, in a practical sense we don't abide fully as we ought to. It's kind of the idea of fellowship. We're always in fellowship with the Father, we're always in fellowship with Christ, because fellowship means partnership, and nothing can ever fully break that if we're really saved. But we lose the joy and the experience of that fellowship. And so it is with abiding, that in a positional sense we always abide but very often we lose the joy and the experience of abiding, and so in a sense abide in me can be to a believer, to get as close to Jesus as possible, to get as much as the life essence of Christ flowing through him as possible. We saw that in detail last week.

But going back to our primary reference, to a non-believer who is faking it, as it were, I want us to look today at the consequences of discipleship. A man has two choices. He can be a branch, truly abiding in Christ, he can be a real Christian, or he can be a branch that's not for real, temporary, fruitless, not continuing in His love, not obeying His commandments, on a continuous basis, and ending up in ultimate and eternal disaster. Now Jesus says to every man who is a would-be disciple to be a real disciple. And I want to show you today the consequences of being a true branch and the consequences of being one that is cast aside because it never was real to begin with. And by the time we're done today, if you've had a hard time making up your mind about whether you ought to be real or a hypocrite, whether you ought to give your life to Jesus Christ or just be religious, whether

you ought to be truly saved or just play the game, if when I'm done you still have that problem then you are truly in the death grip of Satan, because the choice is so obvious when you look at the consequences.

Now last week I told you what the basic meaning of abiding was. Now I want to show you secondly the blessings of abiding branches, thirdly, the burning of non-abiding branches. A real disciple, a real Christian who really commits his life to Jesus Christ is blessed. An individual who superficially attaches to Jesus is burned, and that's just the distinction that I want you to see today.

All right, then, secondly in our outline, you have it there in your bulletin and you can follow if you want, and we're continuing the same message that began last week, we have the blessing of abiding branches, and this we'll see in several verses jumping around as we have to do to get the picture here, verses 5, 7, 8, and 11, record blessings of abiding branches, and they're thrilling blessings for the true disciple. For the one who is a real branch, for the one who really loves Jesus Christ, for the one who is attached to the vine, who has a love relationship with Christ in whom Christ's life really lives, the one through whom He pours His essence and fruit is born, the blessings are just beyond belief, fantastic, thrilling blessings, and I want to show them to you.

First one, and you mark these down because they're important. The first blessing of a truly abiding branch is fruit. Fruit. Verse 5: "I am the vine, ye are the branches." Now He's reminding them of that principle, "He that abideth in Me and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without Me ye can do (what?) nothing. Which means there can't be any fruit on a branch that isn't for real.

All right, there's a basic principle there, that an abiding branch will bring forth much fruit. Now I told you two weeks ago that every Christian bears fruit, there is no such thing as a fruitless Christian. And I told you that Jesus said, "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit". Jesus even said you can tell whether a man is saved or not by his fruit, because He said "By their fruit ye shall know them." And here He says the same thing in verse 5; "He that abideth in Me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit." There will always be fruit in a believer. It may be difficult to find, but it will be there. There may be lapses, there may be times when we don't experience all the abiding life, but there is going to be fruit because that's the character of our life. If Christ is in me then He will produce something in my life. There must be fruit in the life of every believer, there is no such thing as a believer who never bears fruit.

The first blessing, then, is fruit. Now I want to show you some things about this because many of you have been asking me about it and some of you have been studying your Bible to try to find out what fruit is and I waited two weeks because I wanted you to get a little bit hungry before I fed you the fruit. All right, why is fruit important? Fruit is important, and you say well why bother. If I'm saved why don't I just get saved and kind of hang around and go to heaven? Fruit's important. God wants you to have a productive life and He produces things through your life by His own power and His own essence.

Fruit is important first of all because God talks about it so often. In the Old Testament, 106 times you have the main Old Testament word for fruit, in the New Testament 70 times it talks about fruit. Very, very important. Twenty-four of the Twenty-seven New Testament books refer to the idea of fruit. Every one of Paul's letters talks about fruit in the life of a believer. This is not only a principle in the New Testament, as I told you 106 times in the Old Testament, let me read you one of those. Psalm 1: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly or standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on His law does he meditate day and night and he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth fruit in his season. Even in the Old Testament, the blessed man, the godly man, was a fruit bearing man, God's life was in him productively. And you have the same thing in the New Testament, in Galatians, for example, chapter 5, the apostle Paul hits on this so hard. He says in verse 22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is..." and then he lists that long list--love, joy, peace, and so on and so forth and so on and we'll look at that in a moment. And so fruit is a part of the blessed man, a part of the godly man, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, God has designed it to be a part. It is the product of God's life in a man. It's everywhere in the Bible. Not only that, I believe that fruit is important because God is the source of fruit. A man is not the source of fruit. You're not the source of fruit in you're life, you're merely the branch. God is the life-producing agent. It is His power; it is His life that produces fruit. In Hosea 14:8, God says, "From Me is thy fruit found," and that's Old Testament principle. Fruit is of God, and only the person or the branch that abides in the vine so that the vine life flows through the branch only that person can bear fruit, because fruit is of God. And apart from Him there is no fruit at all. In fact, in Philippians 1 and verse 11 He talks about fruit from the standpoint of salvation. It says this "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness." There can't be any fruit unless there's righteousness, there can't be any righteousness unless a man is born again and receives the righteousness of Christ. Now watch this, let me read the verse another way. "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, or by Jesus Christ." Now it can go two ways. The only way you'll ever have fruit is to be saved and it also means that the fruit in you is the product of Christ in you. And so there's no way that an individual can ever be bear fruit apart from righteousness, there's no way a man can ever be righteousness apart from Jesus Christ, and just because you're made righteous in Jesus Christ you still can't produce the fruit, it's still Him in you producing it through you. Remember the principle, Hosea 14:8 "From Me is thy fruit found." And incidentally, Christ even claimed that all of the fruit of His life, everything He ever did and said came from God. Completely, He said, "The Father is working in and through Me."

All right, all spiritual power then is of God and all fruit comes from God. He talked about it a lot, He's the source of it and that's why it's so important. It comes from God, and it's imparted to us.

Now what is fruit? We talk about having fruit in our lives and bearing fruit, and now I'm going to give you just the details of what the fruit is. First I'll tell you what it is not. Fruit is not success. Nowhere in the Bible is success ever synonymous with fruit. Some people think that if something is big, and if there's a lot of people in it, or if it's kind of apparently on the outside successful, that that's fruit. That

is not fruit. That may be fleshly performance, not fruit at all. So many times we think somebody's really fruitful because it's kind of a success thing, and we look at some poor missionary and we say, boy, look at that missionary, I mean that poor missionary is probably some kind of a flop, and the truth of the matter may be that all the years of ministry over there, that although they don't obviously show as much success, may be truly fruit-bearing where the other thing may be fleshly performance with little fruit at all. You do not measure fruit by success.

Secondly, it is not sensationalism. It's not numbers, you don't say somebody has a lot of fruit because they have so many people they've won to the Lord, or because they have so many people in their Bible study, or because they have so many people in their church, or because they have so much emotionalism or because they're so zealous for some kind of a program. That's not fruit either. And let me add this, that fruit cannot be simulated, There's a danger that's very subtle in the lives of believers who bear fruit, and that is to try to do externally what somebody else does. We all aren't the same kind of branch in the sense that we produce the same kind of fruit. There's distinctiveness. Every believer bears fruit that is in a sense unique, though it's common to all of us, for example, the fruit of the spirit is common to all of us, yet there is a sense in which our fruit is unique, uniquely arranged, uniquely ordered, uniquely designed, and grows rather uniquely. And it's very easy for somebody to get on a kind of self-improvement thing where he's trying to be like somebody else, and rather than worry about abiding, and let God produce the fruit, he worries about producing what somebody else produces and winds up producing a simulation of fruit that isn't even real. And as I told you last week, we don't want to get into the thing where we're worried about what the fruit is. We don't even have to worry about that. All we have to do is abide and God produces the fruit, and when a Christian gets to a point where he starts simulating somebody else's fruit that's wrong. He has violated the basic principle of abiding; he's now lying on the ground tying on plastic fruit. Fruit comes by abiding, and it does not come by success, sensation, or trying to simulate somebody else and tying it on.

Now let me show you what fruit is. First of all, fruit is many things in Scripture. Many things. Fruit is number one, the virtues of Christ-like character. Christ-likeness, that's fruit. A believer who is like Christ is a fruit-bearing believer. It is a life that is patterned after Jesus Christ. And I think this is exactly what Paul is driving at in Gal. 5:22 when he says this: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control, against such there is no law." Now that list, all of those, without exception, were characteristics of Jesus Christ. And they are fruit in the life of a believer. We are to reproduce the life of Christ in us as we abide in the vine. Christ-likeness is fruit. He was known by His love. He gave His love to His disciples, He was known by His peace, He gave His peace to His disciples. He was known because of His joy, and we'll see later on this morning that He said I want my joy to remain in you. Everything He has He gives to those who are His, and so Christ-likeness in all of these virtues is fruit. Now that covers a great area. You may look at your life as a Christian and you may say, "Well I don't know if I have any fruit." Well, if there's love there, if there's any joy there, if there's any peace, that's fruit. And it only comes as you abide in Him. Boy, this is a tremendous thing, you know, People look through Galatians chapter 5 and they

say well how can I have love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, you know, how can anybody have all that? I got to work on all those. I'll start with love, and I'll really work on love, and you grunt and I'm done with love, groan and then you say/now I'll go on to peace--oh, peace peace peace peace--now I'm going on to joy--oh joy, ummmm ummmm ummmm. You see. And you try to kind of wade your way through all that stuff and you say oh, this is really rough. Right. By the time you get to the end you've lost your joy, see, and then you've got to start all over again and you're not sure you've got any peace in your heart at all. You don't love anybody. And so what happens is that you try to tie on the fruit of the Spirit. What you need to do is to abide and that's all. Just worry about your relationship to Jesus, that you're close to Him, and that stuff will just come in rapid-fire succession, see. And that will reproduce in you Christ-likeness, see? And that's fruit. And I'll tell you something else that's fruit. Not only Christ-likeness but confession ... in praise. The confession of Christ in praise is fruit. When you praise the Lord, that's fruit. You say, well how do you get that, where do you get that. Well, I got it over in Hebrews 13:15, to be specific. It says this: Verse 15 of 13th chapter of Hebrews, "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. Whether you praise and thank God, when you confess to Him in praise, you are offering Him fruit. Fruit is confession and praise and thanksgiving. When you praise God, when you thank God, that is fruit. That's exactly what He says right there. The utterance of Christ's magnificent name, a worshipful thankful spirit, is fruit. When you pray, and you express to Christ your adoration and your praise, that is fruit. When you get down on your knees and thank Him for all that He has given you, that is fruit. And the Old Testament talks quite a bit about this, Isaiah 57, Hosea 14. Let me give you something else that's fruit.

A third thing that's fruit is contributions to those in need, We usually don't think about that as fruit, but it is. When you supply a need for somebody, that's fruit. And I'll show you why I say that. There are several places in the Bible that bring this out, but let me have you look for a moment at Acts 28:20. And this is interesting. Unfortunately, that's the wrong verse. (Laughter) Small oversight. Well, anyway, look at Philippians 4:17, we'll get at it from another way. I should never count on my memory. I have to realize its depravity. Now the apostle Paul had received from the Church at Philippi a love gift. And when Paul of course was in Rome in chains he was sent this love gift from the believers in Philippi, and as a result of that, he says what he says in Philippians 4:17. He's kind of thinking about this gift and he says, "Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." Now that's kind of interesting. He's saying, it's not that I want a present; it's that I love to see fruit. In other words, I'm happy for your gift of love not because I get it but because (that's not the point) but because it's the fruit of your relationship to Christ. So he considers this gift as fruit. Now in Romans, I think this is correct, and again I'm counting on my memory, 15:28, good, "When therefore I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain." Now he was going to show to the Jews this principle, that converted gentiles had sent him a present. And he's going to say, I'm going to show them this to show the Jews that you're really on the ball, that you've given a present, a gift to me. And he calls it their fruit again. Now evidently, Paul saw this is the key, in the gift, also the love. And he almost ties the two together. The gift represents the love, and so Paul

receives these two gifts and counts them as fruit on the part of both-of these believers. So we see then that a contribution to those in need when done in love is fruit. It is the fruit and the gift of love at the same time. And Paul saw that in at least those two places.

All right, fourthly, fruit is not only Christ-likeness, confession of praise and thanks and contributions of love, but fruit is also communication that blesses other people. Teaching is fruit. Communicating some spiritual truth to somebody else is fruit, and I'll show you where we get that, I Cor. 14:14, and this of course is a very important chapter, talking about tongues, but in the 14th verse it talks also, very importantly, about some other things. I Cor. 14:14: "For if I pray in an unknown tongue my spirit prays." Now here he's not talking about the emphasis of tongues as much as he is the idea of prayer, "for if I pray in an unknown tongue, and here he's putting down this kind of a thing as secondary certainly in prayer, "my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful." My understanding is unfruitful. If a Christian prays in a language that nobody knows his understanding is unfruitful, he is unable to communicate the meaning. If I stand up and I begin to pray to God in a language that nobody knows, I am not contributing anything to you. There is no fruit in that. It is fruitless. The Christian really in tune with the Spirit will think of others first and he will pray with his understanding that lie might impart to them spiritual truth. That is fruit. Communication that blesses others, that is not selfish, is fruit. Now you could push this into a lot of different areas. A believer can entertain himself, he can study the Bible all by himself and kind of get fat and sassy on the Bible and never bother to share it with anybody else. That's fruitless. In the sense it is not sharing and communicating to bless other people. So communication that has as its object somebody else's blessing is also considered fruit and it is unfruitful to do those things which limit only to you the benefit, you see. So fruit, then, is to take others into view.

All right, and then fifthly, and this is a kind of catch-all, fruit is also conduct in general. Conduct in general. In Col. 1:10, it says (Paul of course, speaking to the Colossians in a kind of a prayer) he says, "That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work." Good works are fruit. Conduct in general is fruit. So we see that there are several ways that a believer can bear fruit, reproducing the virtues of Jesus Christ by abiding. Confessing the name of Jesus Christ in praise and thanksgiving, contributing to the needs of others a gift of love. And then the idea of communicating to those around you rather than selfishly being unfruitful, centering everything on your own life, and then this one, conduct in general. Good works are fruit. All those good works that you may do fall into the category of fruit.

Now I want to bring you one last one, and this one is perhaps the one that is the most familiar with people, and that is converts, are also fruit. People won to Jesus Christ through witnessing are the fruit of abiding. Now watch this one. The way to be an effective soul-winner, the way to bear fruit in this sense, is not to run around like a chicken with your head cut off button-holing everybody but it is to do what? It's to abide in the vine. And as you abide the fruit will come and all the opportunities will be there. You worry about concentrating on your relationship to Jesus Christ and He'll put you into every

single opportunity he has designed for you and make it a fruitful opportunity if you're an abiding branch. The principle's simple. Don't get yourself tied in knots. Don't get yourself all strung out because you haven't won "X" amount of people.

I remember when I was in college we had an assignment over the summer that we had to witness to seven people a week, He didn't tell us how many had to get saved for us to get a "B" in the course, but they did tell us that we had to do seven a week, and I'm telling you if there was ever a super-duper legalism that was it. And I mean even if you wanted to do it of your own heart attitude, if you wanted to do it honestly you couldn't because all the time you're doing it you're saying, you're not really doing this honestly, you know you're doing it for a grade. The way to win people to Jesus Christ is not to run around and try to be legalistic, it's to abide. That's the way to do it.

All right, not the Bible teaches us that converts are fruit. John 4 introduces the thought to us in the New Testament. And I want to show you a couple of principles about it, here. John 4, well let's look at verse 31, Jesus of course here is on His way to Samaria and He comes to the little village of Sychar, meet s the woman at the well, she goes to town and gets the whole town to come out and meet Him because she can't believe all the things He told her about herself. Verse 31 in the meantime His disciples besought Him saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, "I have food to eat that ye know not of." And He was right; they didn't have any idea of what He was talking about. Therefore said His disciples one another, "Hath any man brought Him anything to eat?" Jesus saith unto them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work. Say not ye there are yet ..." and then of course He lifts His eyes and He sees the people, by the time He has spoken these words He sees the people coming over the tops of the grain, and the fields, you know, are moving back and forth, and here come the white-robed people from the village of Sychar just moving across the tops of the grain, in the field, and Jesus looks up and He says, "there are yet four months and then cometh harvest." It's not really time to cut the fields yet but lie says, "Look, lift up your eyes and look on the field, They are white already to harvest." Re sees the white-clad people coming across the field and He says, they're the harvest. Verse 36: "And he that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth (what?) fruit, unto life eternal, that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together," You know something? You don't always have to be the one to lead somebody to Jesus to have them as fruit. He that soweth and he that reapeth. Sometimes, you know, all you ever do is sow. I always think of William Carey. He spent 35 years in India before he saw one convert. Somebody said, oh, that's a fruitless life. My friend, almost every convert since that time is going to be on that branch, because he's the one who translated all of the New Testament into almost every dialect available in India at that time. That's sowing--somebody else reaps. So, converts, certainly, are fruit. Let me read you another verse. In chapter 16 of I Corinthians in verse 15, 1 Cor. 15:16 says this: "I beseech you, brethren, ye know the House of Stephanus, that it is the first fruits of Accaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints. Paul calls this particular house of Stephanus the first fruits of Accaia; they were the first converts in Accaia. And so fruit again in the Book of Corinthians is considered to be those who are won to Christ. Romans 1:13 it's possible that this is what Paul's talking about when he says

that I want to come to Rome in order that I might have some fruit among you. So the vine, then, sends life into the branch and the branch bears fruit. All the branch has to do is abide, and the fruit is Christ-likeness, it is the idea of confessing praise of God, it is a contribution in love to somebody in need, it is communication that blesses others, rather than selfishly designed for yourself, it is conduct in general--all our good works, and it is converts--souls won to Jesus Christ. All of that in the New Testament is considered to be fruit of an abiding branch-, and I'll tell you that it's a marvelous thing to realize that Christ is producing in us all of those things, And-if we're not enjoying them, and if we're not experiencing them, and we're not seeing them totally fulfilled in our lives, then the reason is simple. We just aren't abiding experientially as God designed us to abide.

All right, let me show you the second thing, we're going to have to hurry. We always do that, don't we? The second thing that is considered to be a blessing to the abiding branch is in verse 7, and it is faithfulness in God answering prayer. First of all, fruit, and faithfulness in God answering prayer. What a tremendous promise this is, look at verse 7. "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." God says, "If you are truly an abiding branch, I will be faithful to answer every prayer". That's a fantastic promise. It's fantastic. I want you to realize, however, that in this promise there are two conditions that allow God to respond. First of all, it says this. If ye abide in Me. If you're a true believer, right? God (now watch this one) does not obligate Himself to answer the prayers of an unbeliever. And I'll say more about that in a moment. You must be a true branch. The word abide is "mainatai" it's in its erest form, and erest means it's permanently, point action, that settles it. You must be a permanently abiding, boom-you're-in branch. A real believer. The mark of a true Christian is that he abides, and if you're an abiding branch you're a true Christian. He's not saying if you are continuing to stay abiding, he's saying if you are erest, point action, an abiding branch who is connected at one time then that fits condition number one, to have your prayer answered. So if a man has a permanent union with Jesus Christ, if he's a true branch, that's condition one for answered prayer, and as I said a moment ago, God is under no obligation to answer the prayer of an unbeliever, Somebody said to me, does God ever answer the prayer of an unbeliever. Well, yes He does. And He may do that in His own design, in His own sovereignty, in His own will for His own purpose, but He is under no obligation, He makes not promises, He has only His sovereignty to deal with., not His promise, And especially would He not be prone to answer the prayer of a Judas branch.

All right, that's condition one. Let me show you condition two, for answered prayer. "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you," Now that's condition two, for answered prayer. Boy, this is so good, so good. Can you imagine this ye shall verse without that statement? "If you abide in Me ye shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you." Wow. That would be Carte Blanche, wouldn't it? Blank check signed by God fill in the amount. That wouldn't do it. That would pose problems. Oh, you say, but I'm a true branch and I asked for a lot of things and didn't get 'em. Well, you got to check in on condition two. It needs to be there. And it is this. My words abide in you. So what does that mean? It means this. If you're a true branch, condition one, condition two, and you're life is continually

regulated by the Word of God, see it there? Then, the promise comes, Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you. And the word there, the word for word, "My words" is "raimeta", it means utterances. He's talking about the very details of the words of Christ, more than just a composite of the Bible. The individual words of Christ have to be controlling our lives. You know, it's very easy to say, oh, I pattern my life after the Word of God. You say which part? Uh, well, uh, Leviticus 29, I don't know, what's the part? Oh, but the point is that your life has to be patterned after the individual utterances of Jesus, you see what I mean? That gets it down to the nitty-gritty, and the practical thing about loving people, and about studying the truths of the Word of God, and about obeying God. It gets down to the very practical areas. It's not a generalization at all. It's the specific utterances of Jesus in detail that need to be governing our lives. If you're a true believer and the very utterances of Jesus are controlling your life, then you may ask what you will and you'll receive it. Now when a man is a Christian, he meets condition one. And then when that man studies personally the words of Jesus, and I don't just mean the ones that are in red. I don't like red letter Bibles. I don't like them at all. Because that assumes that what Jesus said is more important than what He said through the apostle Paul and it isn't. What Paul said and what Peter said and what John said and Jude and the writers of Hebrews and all of them, that's still the Word of Jesus Christ to us. Those are still His utterances. It's all equally important. So when a man's a Christian he meets condition one, but when that man studies the New Testament, studies the Old Testament primarily the New Testament, learning the truths Christ has revealed and continues to reveal through the writers of the New Testament, when those become the controlling things in his life then he meets condition two and then he can ask what he will and God responds. Because under condition two he's fully controlled by Christ's words.

Now I think the same thing is indicated to us in chapter 14 verse 13, we saw it some weeks ago. Whatever ye shall ask, that will I do. It doesn't say that, does it? It says whatever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do. It says the same thing in verse 14, if ye shall ask anything in my name. It's the same idea. His name. That is, all that Jesus means, all that He implies, all that He is, when you pray with Him in mind, It doesn't mean at the end of your prayer you zap on "in Jesus name" and that's a catch-all. The idea is you're praying consistent with the words and the will of Jesus Christ, and when you are, then your prayer will be answered. And you can be sure that when you get a positive answer to your prayer that at that point you have asked according to His Word and according to His will.

And so the Christian abiding in Christ and in whose heart Christ's words are in complete control will not ask anything contrary to Christ's will. If Christ's words are in control, and He prays out of the control of Christ's words, he couldn't ask anything that would violate Christ's will, could he? And so he will receive what he asks. If the controlling influence of your life is the utterance of Jesus, then you'll never ask anything apart from His will, because you'll be controlled by His Word.

His Word and His Will are always consistent. It's a simple principle. And so as I told you a few weeks back when we were studying the 14th chapter, when you go to prayer your prayer should contain something like this: I'm asking this, Father, because I know it is the will of Jesus Christ. I'm asking this for Jesus' sake, Father. He would like this to be done. Now when you can say that, then you're asking in His Word and in His Will. And it's very easy to do it the other way. I mean, it's very easy not to ask according to the will of Jesus Christ, it's very easy not to be controlled by His utterances, in fact it's frequent. In James 4 in verse 3 it says ye ask and receive not, you say wait a minute, this says if you're a Christian and you ask... no. You ask and you receive not because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts. Do you see the difference? It's one thing to come and say, Father, Jesus wants this, my life is controlled by His precepts, I'm an abiding branch, His life is flowing through me, I sense this is His will. Father; here's my request, that's one thing. It's another thing to say, and by the way, God, I'd like this, that's selfish. That's asking amiss. There's a rather shocking verse along this line that perhaps you've never discovered. It's in chapter 10 of 11 Corinthians and verse 5, and it tells you, really, how to get on the track of really praying so that God can answer. Now listen to this. "Casting down imaginations," that's human thoughts and reasoning's and ideas, "and every high thing that exhalteth itself against the knowledge of God," in other words, you get rid of everything that would violate God's truth and God's knowledge, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Did you get that? The believer must bring in every thought to the obedience of Christ. The thoughts of a Christian must be captive to Christ. Then when you begin to pray, my friend, then you begin to see some things happen. So why is there so little power in prayer in these days, why is there so little power in prayer in our church, in your life? Because we don't really abide and feel Christ's thoughts and have His mind and bring all of our thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ, we are selfish and we ask amiss and therefore God is restricted in answering our prayer. But if on the other hand we have a deep intimate loving relationship to Jesus Christ, the vine, then our desires will be His desires, our will will be His Will, and when we ask we will receive. The Psalmist put it this way: "Delight thyself in the Lord and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Naturally, if you totally delighting in Him His desires will be your desires. What a blessed promise it is, faithfulness in answered prayer. That's the second promise to an abiding branch. I mean, what a thing to realize, I mean if you meet condition one and condition two and God will answer every prayer you bring before Him.

Thirdly, a third marvelous blessing. Not only fruit and faithfulness in answered prayer but the third blessing--the Father's Glory. The Father's Glory. We literally experience the Father's Glory and bring glory to the Father, verse 8. "In this is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." A believer who really abides, who's a fruit-bearing believer, is a glory to God. God is glorified by his life and we're here on this earth to do one thing. To give God glory, aren't we? To give Him the glory that He deserves. And when our life is an abiding life, a fruitful life, God is glorified. What a tremendous principle that is. In fact, everything you do, everything that is produced in your life that is, fruit gives glory to the Father, not you, doesn't it? Because who produces it? God does. Paul put it this way, Romans 15:18: "I will not dare to speak of any of those things .which Christ hath not wrought in me."

Isn't that good? He didn't go around saying listen friends, I want to tell you how good I am at this, or how good I am at that. He said, "I dare not speak of anything that Christ has not wrought in me." Anything he did that was worthwhile, Christ did it. Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ liveth in me." He does it all. He does every bit of it. He does it all through me. I'm just there, I'm just an abiding branch, and He does all the producing in me. I think Peter had the same thing in mind that I Peter 2:12, he says, "Having your behavior honest among the gentiles/whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold glorify whom? God. Glorify God. Whatever's produced in your life gives Him glory. Wouldn't you like to glorify the Father? And as you're an experientially abiding branch, He can produce more fruit and He gets more glory. I mean it's an unbelievable thing that you can actually adorn the doctrine of God, as Paul says. You can actually give Him, glory by an abiding life.

Lastly, fourth thing. Not only fruit, faithfulness and the Father's glory, but fourthly, full joy, verse 11. This is the last benefit, full joy. Oh, this is tremendous, just tremendous. In all the words of this whole chapter through verse 10 all that whole deal, all about abiding and bearing fruit and being for real disciples and having prayers answered and continuing in His love and obeying Him, all that was for one great climactic blessing. To give us joy, verse 11. These things, everything from 15 on, maybe everything from 13 on, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full." What a tremendous promise. I mean, living the Christian life for some people if you looked at it you would think it was a monastic deprivation. You'd assume that Christianity was a sick drudgery, that it was some kind of a bitter religious pill, you know, that they had to take. Oh, listen. Every bit of this is designed for our joy. The Christian, listen friend, the Christian who violates these things isn't the joyous one, is he? Oh, if you want full joy, then you abide in the fullest sense. First He says so that My Joy might remain in you, my very own joy, that which I experience that which I share in total fellowship with the Father. Back in verse 10 He said, as an example he said, "You shall abide in my love even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love." In other words, He is the example of the abiding life, I abide in my Father, and you know what the result is? Full joy. And I'll tell you something, friends, it's wonderful to realize that in the midst of all that Jesus undertook and all that was really heaped on Him by way of abuse He still had full joy. And He says, it's the joy that comes from an abiding relationship and I want to give you that same joy that's mine because I abide in the Father, and when you do you'll have the same joy. Joy comes in an abiding fellowship. When David sinned and no longer sensed the presence of God you know what he cried out? He cried out this. He said, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation." He didn't lose his salvation; he just lost the joy of it. Because he ceased to abide in the fullest sense. And Peter calls it joy unspeakable and full of glory. That's the kind of joy that Jesus had and that's the kind of joy that belongs to a Christian. And now He says this: "That My joy may remain in you and that your joy might be full." Oh, what a fantastic thought. We talked about the filling of the Spirit last Sunday night and told you that when the Bible talks about something being full it means that the overwhelming controlling influence is that thing which fills, right? So what he's saying is that I want you to be just totally consumed with joy. That's terrific. I don't know too many Christians that are. I meet a lot of

grumpy, grouchy Christians. And you do too, don't you? I meet a lot of them that just don't have joy. They're like the lady said, well, you know, somebody commented about her you know, she had a new hat, you know, and they said that's a lovely new hat. She said, well you know whenever I get in the dumps I always get a new hat. And the guy said, oh, so that's where you get 'em. But you know there are a lot of Christians who are really grumpy grouchy down-in-the-dumps Christians, who don't experience full joy, and the reason they don't experience full Joy is because they don't experience fully abiding in Christ. Because when you abide in Him you have fruit, answered prayer, the Father's glorified and you experience full joy. You can always tell that non-abiding branch because it's a down-in-the-mouth kind of wilted looking thing. And when you hear those blessing, my friend, I don't know how you can say no to Jesus Christ. Let me hastily give you the alternative, and it's just as simple as it can be.

I want to show you thirdly the burning of non-abiding branches and it's only in one verse, so we'll look at it. Verse 64 "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." First of all, notice that the branch that doesn't abide, the Judas branch, is a non-believing, false disciple. It's cast forth. He has no living connection with Jesus Christ. He's not real, so he's thrown away. If he was for real that wouldn't happen, you know why? John 6:37 says this: "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." The true disciple is never cast out. This one's cast forth it shows it never was real to begin with. Then it says not only that, he's withered. Just shrivels up. Whatever faint glimpses of love there were are gone. He's like that seed that was planted that sprung up for a little while and the rocky ground and then it died, withered. And then this tragic statement. Men gather them and cast them into the fire. And they are burned. This is a picture of judgment. Who are the men? I'll tell you who the men are. They're angels. God's instrument of judgment are none other than His Holy Angels. In verse 30 of Matthew 13, Christ is talking about the fact that the wheat and the tares will grow together, and He says in judgment day I will say to the reapers gather together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn. Into my barn. Then over in verse 31 he tells us who the gatherers are. "The Son of Man shall send fourth His angels and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend and them who do iniquity and shall cast them, into a furnace of fire, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Verse 49: "So shall it be at the end of the age, the angels shall come forth and separate the wicked from among the righteous and cast them into the furnace of fire, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Jesus repeats it twice. The men who gather are angels, whom God will send to bring the ungodly and the unrighteous, and gather them together to cast them into an eternal hell. That's what He does with Judas branches, and they will burn there forever and forever.

That's the option. That's the choice that every man has. II Thess. 1:7 says this: "And you who are troubled rest with us. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire seeking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the Glory of His power." There is coming a day when God is going to send His angels to gather the ungodly,

every Judas branch from around the world to cast it into an eternal hell. That's tragic. Oh, to be so close to Jesus Christ as to be an apparent branch, and to end up in an eternal hell. That's the worst possible thing, listen to what Peter said. "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (in other words, some people who have been attached to Jesus and they had a head knowledge and they knew about Him and they knew all the facts, after that's happened they are entangled in the world and overcome) the later end is worse with them than the beginning. It would be better off to get out of the church and forget Jesus and be as completely evil as you could be--just don't make any pretense. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after they had known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. He said the dog has turned to his own vomit again and the sow that was washed to her wallowing mire, That's-the worse thing that could ever happen to hang around Jesus and not be for real because eternal retribution will be greater than any other person.

I close with this. William Pope's death in Lancashire, England, I read about is rivaled only by the death of Judas, and I want you to hear that this is a man in our era who died, and I want you to hear what went on. He was a member of the Methodist Church for most of his life, made a pretense of knowing Christ, serving in the church in many capacities, he seemed saved, the biographer said, his wife was a saint who died, had a funeral that was uplifting and glorious, she went to be with Jesus Christ. Immediately after she died he began to dissipate, and the account goes like this. His companions professed to believe in the redemption of demons, wherein he became an admirer of their scheme, a frequenter with them of the public house of prostitution, and in time a common drunk. He finally became a disciple of Thomas Payne, and would assemble with his friends on Sundays to confirm each other in their infidelity and often they would amuse themselves by throwing the word of God on the floor, kicking it around the room and treading on it with their feet. But one day he was seized by God with tuberculosis. One went to see him and spoke of the merit of the Great Redeemer, and mentioned how he could be saved, and mentioned several cases in which God had saved him, the greatest of sinners. Pope replied this, and I quote, I have no contrition, I cannot repent, God will damn me, I know the day of Grace is lost, God has said that such as me I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when you're fear cometh, I have denied Him, my heart is hardened. Then he cried this. "Oh, the hell the pain I feel, I have chosen my way, I have done the horrible damnable deed. I have crucified the Son of God afresh, I have counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, oh that wicked and horrible thing of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, which I know that I have committed, I want nothing but hell, come oh devil and take me."

There's a man who spent his whole life in the church, and his end was infinitely worse than his beginning. And every man has the same choice. You can be an abiding branch in the vine, receive all the blessings, or you can be burned.

Father we thank you for your Word, for its power, for its clarity. And right now we ask you to move on the hearts of people, to do your perfect work.

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