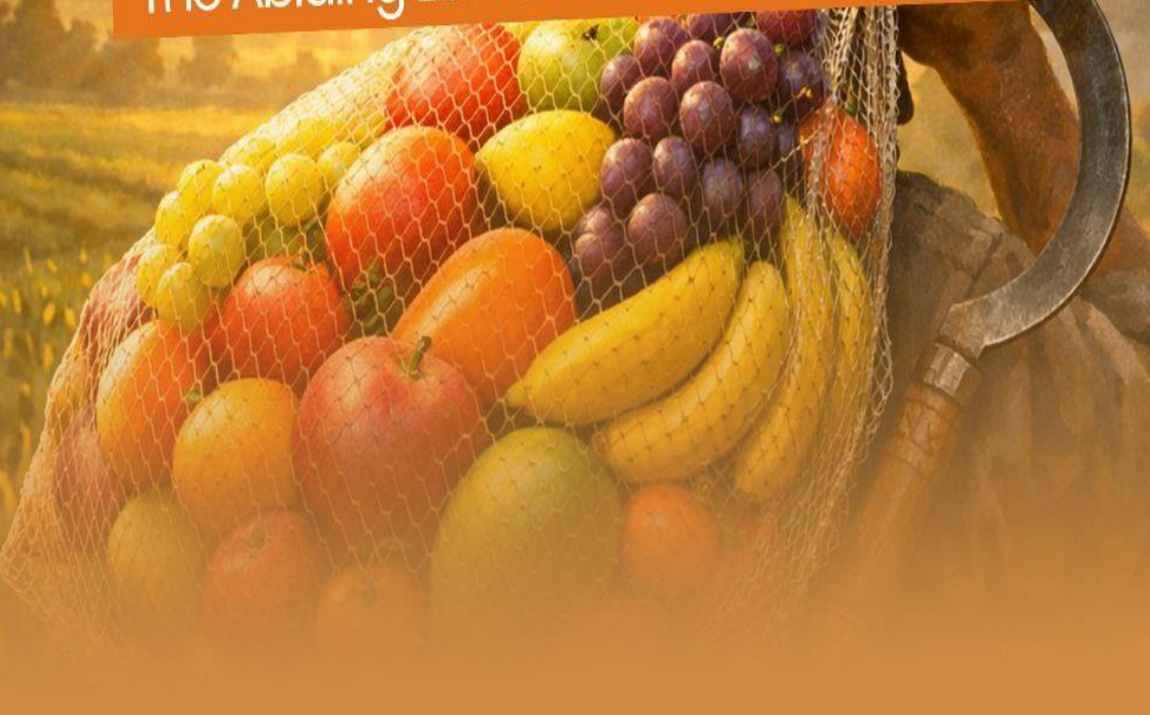


BEARING MUCH FRUIT

The Abiding Life and Its Abounding Fruit



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contact+2348089440040 or send a mail to:

theyoungministersforum@gmail.com

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The Abiding Life and Its Abounding Fruit

An Issue Paper

INTRODUCTION

In our last issue paper, *First Things First*, our burden was the ordering of life and ministry around Christ. We considered the matter of priority—that one thing which gives order to every other thing, that one centre which ought to define the life of a believer and a kingdom-minded saint. We saw that the Kingdom of God must become the governing order of our lives, and that where Christ does not take His rightful place, all else falls into disorder and chaos. As the Lord Jesus Himself declared, "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (**Matthew 6:33**).

But now, in this time, the Lord is pressing another block of emphasis upon our hearts: **bearing much fruit**. The former burden emphasized kingdom priority, the present would emphasize the secret of kingdom productivity. For a life rightly ordered under the Kingdom of God is not a life of mere profession or position—it is a long obedience in the same direction that leads to abounding fruitfulness.

Our Lord Jesus Christ declared in **John 15:8**, "*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*" In these words we are shown not only the possibility of fruitfulness, but the very desire and delight of God concerning His people. The Father is glorified, honored, and exalted when the lives of His children bring forth fruit—and not merely fruit, but **much fruit**. **John 15:2** nails the emphasis again, that every branch which bears fruit, the Father "*purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*".

This, then, is the burden of this issue: to consider the mind of Christ concerning true fruitfulness. What does Christ mean by fruitfulness? Why does this teaching matter? And how does such fruitfulness come forth in the life of the believer? To answer these questions, we turn our attention to that great discourse of our Lord recorded in **John 15:1–17**—a passage spoken on the very night of His betrayal, in the shadow of the cross. We would approach this study in a tripod order: *head, heart, and hand*. By *head*, I mean

the theological understanding of our union with Christ. By *heart*, I mean the deep, burning response of the inner man to the profound implications of that union. By *hands*, I mean the practical ways we apply this truth in cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

I. THE POSITION OF JOHN 15 IN THE FAREWELL DISCOURSE

1.1 A Discourse in the Shadow of the Cross

The teaching of John chapter 15 does not stand alone. It occupies a strategic and deliberate place within what biblical scholars have long identified as the *Farewell Discourse* of our Lord Jesus Christ—a sustained body of teaching spanning John chapters 13 through 17. This discourse was delivered in the solemn hours immediately preceding the crucifixion, on the occasion of the Passover feast. The atmosphere was charged with spiritual intensity, for as the Evangelist records, "*the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him*" (**John 13:2**). It was in this context that the Lord chose to gather His disciples and pour into them the most concentrated and essential teachings of His earthly ministry.

In this respect, John 13–17 bears a striking resemblance to the book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament. Just as Deuteronomy constitutes Moses' final address to Israel—a summation of the Law, a rehearsal of their journey in the wilderness, a reading again of the law and God's covenant, a charge for the journey ahead for the nation, encouragement of the new leader and a priestly prayer for the 12 tribes—so the Farewell Discourse constitutes our Lord's final address to His disciples: a summation of His mission, a rehearsal of the new commandment, the work of the Holy Spirit—another comforter, and a charge for the continuation of His work after His departure. Moses said to Israel, "*And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them*" (**Deuteronomy 5:1**). In like manner, Jesus gathered His own and spoke to them the things they must hear, keep, and do—for the perpetuation of His life and mission on the earth.

1.2 The Flow and Themes of John 13–17

In John 13, Jesus demonstrated servant leadership by washing the feet of the disciples. This is a major emphasis in His teaching (**Matthew 20:25-28**). He showed them how they are to wash one another's feet, and that those who follow Him must seek to serve others, not to be served (**John 13:14**). That is so essential to the life and ministry of Jesus. He also spoke about loving one another—that the world would know they are His disciples by their love (**John 13:35**). Love is quintessential in the life and ministry of Jesus. The chapter also records the foretelling of Peter's denial which is an obvious implication of the impotency of self-sufficiency in the service of God (**John 13:38**). This incident would later drive home the point: "*Without me you can do nothing*" (**John 15:5**) and "*tarry ye until ye be endued with power*" (**Luke 24:49**).

In John 14, Jesus spoke about being the way to the Father (**John 14:6**). He then spoke about the Holy Spirit — the Comforter — who would come because He was going to be glorified. He also spoke about the disciples going in His power and using His name. But for them to use His name, there would be a Comforter coming in His name. The phrase "another Comforter" is deeply significant in Greek (**John 14:16**). There are two Greek words for *another* — *allos* and *heteros*. *Allos* means another of the same kind; *heteros* means another of a different kind (Nb: These two words are sometimes used similarly). Here, Jesus used *allos* — that is, the Comforter is of the same kind as Him: equally divine, equally God, yet a distinct Person of the Godhead.

The word "comforter" comes from *parakletos*, meaning one called alongside to help: an active, present helper for the disciples, just as Jesus was with them physically. All that Jesus did for them physically, the Spirit will do for them spiritually. This Comforter was with them and would dwell in them — that is, Jesus was with them physically, but would now dwell in them by the presence of His Spirit (**John 14:17**). He would teach them and remind them of the things Jesus had taught them (**John 14:26**). The one who reminds must be one who knows that person well — and so the Holy Spirit, who knows Christ fully, comes to continue His life and ministry in the disciples. This speaks to the indwelling of the Spirit and points to the doctrine of the Trinity.

It is precisely from this foundation—servant love established in John 13, and the promised indwelling Spirit in John 14—that **John 15** emerges as the logical and spiritual climax (if we may say) of the discourse. Having shown them *how to live toward one another* and *who would empower them from within*, the Lord now addresses the most fundamental question of all: *what is the secret of their fruitfulness?* The answer He gives is singular and unambiguous: union with Himself. "*Without me ye can do nothing*" (**John 15:5**). It is this declaration—perhaps one of the most radical statements of spiritual dependency in all of Scripture—that forms the theological heartbeat of John 15 and the central concern of this issue.

The discourse continues in **John 16**, where the Lord returns again to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, now with greater specificity. The Comforter will "*reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment*" (**John 16:8**). He will guide the disciples into all truth, for "*he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak*" (**John 16:13**). The Spirit's ministry is thus entirely Christ-centred and Christ-exalting: "*He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you*" (**John 16:14**). The Lord also prepares them for the inevitable suffering and persecution that await them in the world, assuring them that though tribulation will come, He has overcome the world (**John 16:33**).

The discourse reaches its majestic conclusion in John 17 — the High Priestly Prayer of our Lord. Here, Jesus lifts His eyes to heaven and prays with the full weight of His salvific mission. He prays for His own glorification (**John 17:1**), for the preservation and sanctification of His disciples and the prosperity of His mission through them (**John 17:11, 17, 18**), and for all who would believe through their witness (**John 17:20**). The burden of the prayer is *union* — that they may be one as the Father and Son are one, and that they may be one with the Father and the Son in their whole being (**John 17:21–22**) — and *mission*: "*As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world*" (**John 17:18**). The world, He declares, will believe through the union and mission of the Church.

1.3 The Critical Significance of John 15 Within the Discourse

Seen in this light, John 15 occupies what may be described as the *theological centre* of the Farewell Discourse. It stands between the great commandment—servant sacrificial love of John 13 and the Great missionary commission of John 16–17, anchoring both in the doctrine of union with Christ. Without the vine-and-branches teaching of John 15, the love command of John 13 has no root, and the mission of John 17 is impossible. It is in John 15 that the Lord reveals the *how* behind everything else He has taught them: the how of love, the how of obedience, the how of bearing witness, the how of prevailing in prayer. All of it flows from one source—abiding in Him.

This discourse, therefore, is not merely a record of Jesus' final words. It is His *manifesto for the Church*: a comprehensive vision of what the people of God are to be, how they are to live, and what they are to accomplish in the world. And at the very centre of that vision stands John 15—the chapter of the Vine, the branches, and the fruit that glorifies the Father. It is to the substance of that chapter that we now turn our attention.

II. THE IMAGE OF THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

2.1 The Metaphorical Description: Father, Son, and Disciples

In John chapter 15, Jesus uses a powerful metaphor to describe the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the disciples. He states: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1), and again in verse 5: "I am the vine, ye are the branches" (John 15:5). The Father is the husbandman—the gardener, the planter, the one who owns the vine, cultivates it, constantly works on it, and delights in its fruit. The Son is the vine planted by the Father, and the disciples are the branches.

2.2 The Significance of 'The True Vine'

The phrase *I am the true vine* must be understood in the context of all that Jesus had previously said about **truth/true**. The Apostle John had already written that "*grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*" (John 1:17). He is the

“true light” and *“the true bread from heaven”* (**John 1:9, John 6:32**). Jesus Himself had said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life”* (**John 14:6**), and that **true** worshippers must worship *“in spirit and in truth”* (**John 4:23**). The idea of the true—the real, the fullness, the reality—runs throughout the ministry of Jesus in the Gospel of John. When He says He is the true vine, He is saying He is the reality, the completeness, the fullness of all that God had been pointing to. All that Moses represented was a shadow; what the Old Testament spoke of was a type. Jesus is the fulfilment, the substance, the reality (**Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1**).

From the very beginning, God commanded man to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28). That was the charge at creation. Now Jesus, as the true Vine, comes to bring about a new creation—one that would fill the earth with the fruit of His life and His Spirit. The vine is also a symbol for Israel (Psalm 80:8-16; Hosea 10:1; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 17:6-10; Isaiah 5:1-7). In Isaiah chapter 5, God had spoken of Israel as His vine—He planted them, invested in them, and protected them—but they failed Him and produced wild grapes (Isaiah 5:1-4). The Psalms also mention how the vine of Israel was broken down (Psalm 80:8-16). Unlike the failure of the people of Israel, now Jesus declares: I am the true vine—God's perfect Son, in whom the Father is well pleased (Matthew 3:17).

The Father, as the husbandman, is the one who planted, owns, and has invested in the vine. He is the one who will be glorified when it produces. He came to Israel and found no fruit where He had every right to expect it. So He will be glorified and honored not in little, but in the abundant yield of the vine.

2.3 The Union of Christ with the Father: The Pattern of Dependence

This principle of dependence is not new. It was the very way Jesus Himself lived on earth in relation to the Father. In John 5:19, He said: *“The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do.”* And again: *“I can of mine own self do nothing”* (**John 5:30**). It was recorded in John 6: *As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me* (**John 6:57**). In John 7 He declared: *“My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent*

me" (John 7:16). In John 8: *"as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things...the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him" (John 8:28–29).* In John 10, He stated: *"I and my Father are one" (John 10:30),* and: *"the Father is in me, and I in him" (John 10:38).* He said these things again and again—His union with the Father was the constant testimony of His life.

This union—this shared life between the Father and the Son—is the very pattern Jesus now holds before His disciples. In John 17, He prayed that the disciples would be one even as He and the Father are one (**John 17:21–22**), saying: *"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:23).* The Father is in Jesus. Jesus is in the disciples. There is a shared life, a common stream of divine power and purpose flowing from the Father, through the Son, into the branches. This was why Jesus asked that heart-piercing rhetorical question from Philip when he asked Him to show them the Father. He said:

Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. John 14:8-11

The words and works of Jesus were done by the Father's indwelling in Him. So, when we see Jesus, we can see the Father. The way Jesus lived on earth—in full dependence upon the Father, drawing upon His life, His power, and His mission—is the same way He calls the disciples to live. The first Adam sought independence, the last Adam sought dependence. The first wanted to know good and evil by Himself; the last Adam said, "Not my will but yours".

What is this dependence of Christ? Jesus lived in close communion with His Father. (*John 5:19–20; John 10:15; John 17:1, 5*) He prioritized personal times of withdrawal from men to remain with God. (*Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; Luke 6:12*) We see throughout His earthly life that

He turned from the pressures and demands of daily situations to the Father in heaven by looking up to heaven in prayer and dependence. (*Mark 6:41; Mark 7:34; John 11:41; John 17:1*) Looking to heaven is a posture that reflects His reliance upon the Father and His living communion with Him. Despite his intensely busy schedule, His communion with the Father stands as an example to us today. (*John 13:15*) From the beginning of His life to the end, Jesus lived in union and dependence upon the Father. (*Luke 2:49; John 4:34; John 5:19; John 14:10; Luke 23:46*).

A key passage that helps us understand the relationship between the Father and the Son is **John 1:18**: “*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*”

The expression “**in the bosom of the Father**” speaks of the deepest intimacy and fellowship. The word *bosom* refers to the place closest to the heart—the chest or the lap—where one rests in nearness and affection. It suggests a relationship of deep closeness, a place where only those who share the deepest fellowship may dwell. Thus, the Scripture is revealing the eternal intimacy between the Father and the Son. The Son lives in the closest communion with the Father. Because of this relationship, He alone can truly reveal God to the world.

The verse also says that the Son “**declared**” the Father. The word translated *declared* comes from a Greek word (*exēgeomai*) which carries the sense of explaining, interpreting, or making something known. In other words, Jesus has come to **interpret God to us**, to make the invisible God known in visible form. What Jesus showed in His earthly life was therefore not merely moral teaching or religious instruction. Rather, His life was the expression of the Father Himself. In His words, actions, character, compassion, and authority, Jesus revealed the nature and glory of God. The life of the Father flowed through Him naturally because of the intimate union with the Father.

This is why Jesus could reveal God so perfectly. He lived in that deepest communion with the Father. His life on earth was lived out of that shared life with the Father. In the same way, if believers are to reveal Christ

to the world, it must begin with a relationship before activity. Jesus Himself first lived in communion with the Father, and from that communion flowed everything He did. The works, the words, the miracles, and the mission all flowed from that living fellowship. Thus, before the works of Christ came the **shared life with the Father**, and it was from that life that He revealed God to the world.

III. UNION WITH CHRIST

3.1 The Meaning of Union with Christ

Union with Christ is one of the most important themes in the New Testament. The believer is frequently described as being *in Christ*—especially in the Pauline epistles. For Paul, “In Christ” is the fundamental definition of being a Christian. Paul perhaps described himself, though in the third person, as “a man in Christ”; I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago... (**2Corinthians 12:2**). But what does this mean?

In His own divine wisdom, God made the incarnation, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ inclusive in its design and sufficient in its scope. He identified all who place their faith in Christ Jesus as united with Him. Those who put their faith in Him participate in His death, His burial, His resurrection, and His ascension. Just as the whole human race was once in Adam, so those who believe are now in Christ, Romans chapter 5 helps us see this clearly: *"by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men"* (**Romans 5:12**). And again: *"by one man's disobedience many were made sinners"* (**Romans 5:19**). We were in Adam. We shared his fallen life, his nature, and the judgment of God that came upon him. Just as a child inherits the genetic makeup of his parents—coming out from their life, sharing their life—so everyone born of the flesh is in union with Adam, sharing his fallen nature and his death sentence. Adam became a fountain of death, and from his fountain death flows to all humanity.

3.2 Christ: The Last Adam and the Beginning of New Creation

The Scripture calls Jesus both the second man and the last Adam (**1 Corinthians 15:45–47**). These are two distinct but related titles. As the **last Adam**, He is the covenantal head who reverses what the first Adam did —

where the first Adam brought sin, condemnation, and death upon all humanity, the last Adam brought righteousness, justification, and life (**Romans 5:18–19**). He is called the *last* Adam because He brought an end to the old Adamic order — its sin, its curse, and its death — by taking it fully upon Himself at the cross (**Galatians 3:13; Romans 6:6**). As the **second man**, He is the head of a new humanity, the beginning of a new order of existence — not of the earth, but from heaven (**1 Corinthians 15:47**).

It was by His resurrection that He was declared and manifested as the firstborn of this new creation, the firstborn from the dead: *"who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence"* (**Colossians 1:18**). He is the first in rank of the new creation, the firstborn among many brethren (**Romans 8:29**). As the book of Hebrews declares: *"both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one"* (**Hebrews 2:11**) — of one stock, one origin, one life. That is why 2 Corinthians 5:17 declares: *"if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* To be in Christ is to be in union with Christ—to be the offspring of the new creation. As Jesus said in Isaiah's prophetic echo: *"I and the children whom the LORD hath given me"* (**Isaiah 8:18; Hebrews 2:13**). We are now joined to Him. We are one spirit with Him. We share His life.

3.3 How We Are United with Christ

When a believer places faith in Christ, he is united with Him—identified with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. Colossians 2:12 says: *"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."* It is by the operation of God—by the power of God—that we are quickened together with Christ (**Colossians 2:13**). Galatians 3:27 declares: *"as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* To be baptized into Christ—to be immersed, soaked, completely buried in Him—is to put on Christ: to take on His identity, His power, His nature, to share His life. It is to take our place in Him from the cross to the throne. We died with Him, we rose again with Him, we are seated with Him in heavenly places (**Ephesians 2:6**). As 1 Corinthians 1:30 declares: *"of him are ye in Christ Jesus,*

who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

The example the Bible uses to illustrate this union is marriage. A man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become **one flesh (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5)**. There is a level of knowledge, vulnerability, intimacy, and shared life that belongs to no other relationship. In the same way, the Bible says: *"he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit"* (**1 Corinthians 6:17**). You are united with the Lord and you are one spirit with Him. Is this how you see yourself? Do you feel betrothed to the Lord? Do you know that you have your engagement ring—the seal of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13)? This happens by the indwelling of the Spirit of God in our hearts. As Romans 8:9 declares: *"if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you...if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."* The Spirit of Christ dwells and lives and abides in us—and so we are in living union with God.

*By this **we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.** (1Jn 4:13)*

I pray that you see this, this holy union, deeper than the union between a man and a woman. That we have come into a shared life, the source. There is a life, a virtue, a power that flows from Him.

3.4 The issue and the Virtue

*And Jesus said, **Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.** Luke 8:46*

The story of the woman with the issue of blood stands out in the New Testament account of Jesus' healing ministry. A defining turn came into her life when she heard about Jesus. She had been introduced to diverse physicians who promised her a cure, but she could not be healed by any. The narrative of Luke is quite interesting because he was a Physician himself, and he recorded the failure of his learned colleagues. Or was he being sly? Obviously, he wasn't. The story would have left an indelible mark on Luke himself, don't you think? He emphasized the incapacity of diverse

trained experts compared with the immediacy of Jesus' healing, though unconsciously.

The Physicians would take money, use means, and wait over time to bring their cure. But this Great Physician, never took a dime and didn't waste her time; her issue stopped immediately when she touched Him. The Bible says that when she touched Jesus, Jesus said, "*Somebody touched me*". Many people thronged Jesus and would have had contact with Him physically. But there was somebody that connected soul to soul with Jesus. Jesus always recognizes the "somebody" in any crowd whose heart connects to His. Then he said "*For I perceive that virtue has gone out of me.*" (Luke 8:46). The word virtue is rendered in other versions as **power** — *dynamis*. Something miraculous in nature flowed out of Him. The woman issued blood, Jesus issued a flood of power. Something living, something divine, something vital flowed out of Him and healed that woman. From Christ is the flood of vitality touching parched and dry lives, from Him is the living waters causing the dead sea to live. For it is written "*...because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and **every thing shall live whither the river cometh.***"

Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. Ezekiel 47:8-9

Wherever He went, everything lives.

*There is a life-giving river,
A flood flowing from the Redeemer.
It is healing — forever —
Even for the most broken sufferers.*

And that virtue was not occasional. It was constant. A mighty supply. Boundless resources. A stable stream. An ever flowing river. It was

the life of the Father flowing through Him. That is why everywhere Jesus went there seems to be a form of Edenic normalcy being restored. The sick were healed. The lepers were cleansed. The oppressed were delivered. Death itself was overcome.

Now here is the mystery of union with Christ. That same life that flowed through Jesus is the life that now flows to those who are in Him. Before Christ, we were like that woman with the issue of blood. There was a constant draining of life. Sin was like a haemorrhage in the soul. It was corruption flowing out of us. Our righteousness, the Bible says, was like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). There was nothing clean coming out of us. There was only corruption and decay.

But when that woman touched Jesus, something happened. The flow of death stopped because the flow of life met it. Virtue flowed from Christ. Power flowed from Christ. Life flowed from Christ. She touched the hem, now we are connected to the source, heavenly current, supernatural vitality flowing into and through our innermost being, gushing from Emmanuel's vein. The woman had death issuing from her, Jesus had life issuing from Him. When she connected with Christ, death was drowned by the flow of life. Now, we don't just touch him, we are united with Him.

The sap of the vine is not just a liquid, it is an invisible life encoded in fluid form, so it can circulate through all the branches. It transforms dry branch into green leaves, blossoming flowers and fruit bearing life. Through our union with Christ, we have been connected with the invisible and unstoppable continuous flow of heavenly sap circulating through our whole being. When you believed, I could also hear Jesus call your name saying; "Somebody touched me, and virtue now flows from me to them eternally".

The root supplies resources but the pull from the leaves of the branches create the demand. There is a negative pressure from the leaves that pulls or sips as though you are using a long straw. The supply is mighty; our demands ought not be tiny. When we place our faith in Christ, that life

begins to flow into us. That power of His resurrection begins to work in us. The Bible speaks of coming to see by revelation **“the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe”** (Ephesians 1:19). It is the very power that raised Christ from the dead. And that power quickened us while we were dead in sin through our union with Christ.

So union with Christ means this: the life that is in Him is now the life that flows into us and through us.

*The power that made Him conquer sin,
Flows now in me
The life that made Him overcome death and the grave,*

*Lives now in me
The might that made Him walk in victory over Satan,
Works now in me
The strength that made Him live in perfect obedience to the Father—
that same life, that very life,
now works mightily in me from Him.*

That is why Jesus speaks of the vine and the branches. The branch does not produce life by itself. The life flows from the vine. The branch simply receives. The branch only abides. And the life of the vine flows through it. That is the Christian life. It is not us struggling to produce fruit. It is the life of Christ flowing through us. It is the virtue of Christ surging through our being.

It is the resurrection life of Christ flowing through us. The same Christ who walked the earth in power now lives in His people. His life flows from the throne of grace into and through those who abide in Him. We are His outlet upon the earth, the vessels in which He touches the dying world. Christ lives in you now.

That is the secret. That is what is working in us. Oh, that we might see the exceeding greatness of His power. If the touch of the hem of His garment carried that surge of power, how much more will having a full union with Him? I tell you, it will multiply the effect exponentially and cause

a ripple in every fibre of your being even now. And when that life flows freely, the haemorrhage of the soul stops, the corruption of the heart is healed, and the fruit of Christ begins to appear. That is the life of the vine flowing through the branches.

3.4 The Fullness Found in Union with Christ

And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. (Gen 25:5)

*And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: **and unto him hath he given all that he hath.** (Gen 24:36)*

*Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: **for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.** (Gen 21:10)*

Father Abraham gave his son Isaac all that he had — Isaac was his heir (**Genesis 25:5**). Just as Isaac inherited all that his father Abraham had, so Jesus has everything that the Father has: "*For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell*" (**Colossians 1:19**). Christ is the heir of all that God has and all that God is — "*Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?*" (**Hebrews 1:4–5**). And because we are joined to Him, we are complete in Him: "*ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power*" (**Colossians 2:10**).

We are joint-heirs with Him — that is, we are participants in the Father's inheritance, sharing both its privileges and its responsibilities (**Romans 8:17**). The union of Rebekah with Isaac beautifully illustrates this. Through that union, she shared in Abraham's wealth and answered the call to leave her land for the land of promise. Because of her union with Isaac, she received his inheritance: "*And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things*" (**Genesis 24:53**). In the same way, God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (**Ephesians 1:3**). All that a believer needs — righteousness, holiness, redemption, forgiveness — is found in Him. Our relationship with Christ is not merely that of a student to a teacher, nor even that of a servant to a master. He has brought us into

God's own life. There is a deep, living, mystical union with the triune God — and from that union flows every blessing of the new creation.

But we also share in the responsibilities of Christ on the earth. By His resurrection and ascension, Christ was publicly declared to possess all authority in heaven and on earth (**Matthew 28:18**) — an authority that is His by eternal right as the Son, and now manifested in His glorified humanity as the risen Lord. He has been given the nations and the uttermost parts of the earth as His possession (**Psalms 2:8**). Therefore, as co-heirs with Him (**Romans 8:17**), we are called to bring the earth under His Lordship — to go to all nations, making disciples and baptising them in His name (**Matthew 28:19–20**). The implication of baptism is profound. It is a public declaration of a new identity — an outward proclamation of an inward reality. The believer is saying: I have died with Christ, I have risen with Christ, and I now belong to Christ (**Romans 6:3–4; Galatians 3:27**). It is, in a sense, a naming ceremony — the moment one is publicly identified with the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' baptism seems to be a foreshadowing — a prefiguring, if you will — of what He was going to accomplish on the cross. When He said, "*I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!*" (**Luke 12:50**), He was pointing to the cross itself. His water baptism was His public identification with our fallen humanity — a symbolic anticipation of what was to come. As the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (**John 1:29**), He stepped into the waters as He would later step into the judgment — in our place, on our behalf. On the cross, that baptism was fully realised.

Jesus bore our sin and its full condemnation through His identification with fallen humanity (**2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:6**). Our own baptism, then, is a participation in His accomplished reality: we are identified with His death, buried with Him, and raised to walk in newness of life (**Romans 6:3–4**). In Him, we receive His righteousness and stand in His acceptance before the Father. When we are baptised in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (**Matthew 28:19**), it is a public declaration — a naming ceremony — of our new identity in the triune God and our entrance into the fullness of union with Him.

And now, the risen Christ sends us to extend that reality to all nations. "*All nations*" here implies *ethnos* — all tribes, people groups, and tongues. As co-

heirs with Him, we join Him in His mission, and that mission is not without cost. We share in the fellowship of His sufferings so that all nations may be brought under Him (**Philippians 3:10; Colossians 1:24**). Our union with Christ encompasses both His life and His mission — its privileges and its responsibilities.

This is what John chapter 15 is declaring when it speaks of the branches. We share the life, the power, and the nature and the mission of the vine. And this is why a believer cannot and need not struggle in his own strength. The Christian life is not a life of striving to become by human effort—it is the life that by itself brings forth. That is why the Lord emphasizes, *abide*. To abide is to remain, to draw, to receive—to understand that there is a full provision in the vine and to open oneself up to receive from that provision and vision for maximum and impactful Christian living.

Christianity is lived from the position of UNION. Christ died—and I died with Him. Christ rose—and I rose with Him. Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father, far above principalities and powers (**Ephesians 1:20–21**)—and I am seated with Him (**Ephesians 2:6**). From that position, I exercise authority over the power of darkness, understanding that this is God's provision. And from that position, I bear fruit. The bearing of fruit is simply the obvious and natural product of a living union with Christ.

3.5 More on Union with Christ in the Pauline Writings

One of the clearest places where this language appears is Ephesians chapter 1. In that chapter Paul repeatedly uses expressions like **“in Christ,” “in Him,”** and **“through Jesus Christ.”** Again and again he reminds believers that every aspect of salvation is found **in Christ**. (Ensure you read the book of Ephesians and note this phrases or similar one yourself, it will be enlightening.)

For example, Paul writes: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”* (*Ephesians 1:3*). What Paul is showing us is that every blessing of salvation is

located **in Christ**. We are chosen **in Him**, redeemed **in Him**, forgiven **in Him**, given an inheritance **in Him**, and sealed with the Spirit **in Him**.

When the Bible speaks about salvation, it uses many different words and metaphors. Scripture speaks of **forgiveness, justification, redemption, reconciliation, adoption, sanctification, and regeneration**. Each of these words describes an aspect of what God has done for us through Christ. But Paul helps us see something deeper. These are not blessings that God gives to us separately. Rather, God gives us **Christ Himself**.

God did not simply give us forgiveness here, sanctification there, and redemption somewhere else. Instead, God gave us **His Son**, and in the Son we receive everything. Paul says this very clearly:

“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

(1 Corinthians 1:30)

Christ Himself is our righteousness.

Christ Himself is our sanctification.

Christ Himself is our redemption.

Another way Paul describes this union is through the image of the **body of Christ**. “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” (*1 Corinthians 12:27*). Christ is the head, and we are the body. The life of the body flows from the head. In the same way, the believer draws life from Christ. Scripture even speaks of the deep closeness of this union: “*For we are members of his body.*” (*Ephesians 5:30*). This means our life is derived from Him.

Paul also teaches that believers are **baptized into Christ**: “*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” (*Galatians 3:27*). The word *baptized* here carries the idea of being **placed into, immersed into, or brought into union with Christ**.

This union becomes real in our lives through the **indwelling of the Holy Spirit**. Paul writes: “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” (**Romans 8:9**). And again: “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” (*Romans 8:10*). So the indwelling of the Spirit in me is **Christ living in me**.

This is why Paul can make the remarkable statement: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” (*Galatians 2:20*). The Christian life is therefore not merely an attempt to imitate Christ from the outside. It is **Christ living His life in the believer**. Faith becomes the means by which we live from this union. Through faith we rely on Christ, rest in Christ, and draw life from Christ. This is why Paul also says: “*For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*” (*2 Corinthians 1:20*)

Everything God has promised is fulfilled **in Christ**. The gifts of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, the grace for holy living, the ability for ministry—all of these flow from our union with Christ. Through union with Christ we are brought into the life that flows from God Himself—the love of God, the joy of God, the power of God, and the presence of God. This is the great reality of the New Testament: **life in Christ**.

Paul could not conceive of a Christian living in sin. He asked, “Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound?” and immediately answered, “God forbid!” (*Romans 6:1-2*). Why? Because we have been baptized into His death. Our old self—our “old man”—was crucified with Him (*Romans 6:6*).

But what does that really mean? Our old self is not merely our past mistakes or former way of living. It refers to all that we were in Adam—our fallen nature, our bondage to sin, our identity apart from God. In Christ, all that has ended. Through His death and resurrection, we are raised to a newness of life (*Romans 6:4*).

Paul often describes this new life as new man, something we now put on—our new identity in Christ (Colossians 3:9-10). It is a new humanity begun in Jesus, fully alive and united with God. Our baptism symbolizes this transformation: the death of the old self and the birth of the new.

IV. BEARING FRUIT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

4.1 The Context of Fruit-Bearing in John 15

When Jesus said, "*I am the vine, ye are the branches*" (**John 15:5**), the emphasis of the entire discourse was this: the disciples can only bear fruit in their abiding relationship with Christ. The end of their union with Christ is that they will bring forth fruit that glorifies the Father. The nation of Israel had failed in this—when God came to them, He found wild grapes (**Isaiah 5:2–4**). So what fruit was God expecting from Israel, and what fruit is Jesus now speaking of?

The fruit God expected from Israel as a nation was that they would live in conformity to His law, His will, and His purposes—that they would be a distinct people, separate from the nations, and that through them God would reach the nations of the earth (**Deuteronomy 7:6; Exodus 19:6**). But at different times, when God came expecting that fruit of conformity to His will—righteousness, holiness, and a faithful representation of Him—He could not find it.

4.2 The Nature of the Fruit Jesus Speaks Of

In the context of John 15, the fruit Jesus speaks of has several dimensions. **The first and most foundational is *Christ-like character*.** The vine and the branch are one—the fruit of the vine is the vine itself. The grape does not contradict the vine; it expresses it. So the fruit the believer is to bear is the very character of Christ expressed through their life. Jesus had already laid this out in John 13 when He gave the love commandment: "*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you*" (**John 13:34**). In John 15 He returns to this same theme: "*This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you*" (**John 15:12**). That servant-like love—the love that washes feet, that lays down its life—is the first and defining fruit of abiding in Christ. The Apostle Paul would later

describe this fruit of character in detail: *"the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"* (Galatians 5:22–23).

The second is in obedience to Christ. Jesus says: *"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."* (John 15:14). The life that draws from the vine is a life that increasingly conforms to the will of the vine. *It is a life in conformity to His will—righteousness, holiness, and a faithful representation of Him—He could not find it.* This can be linked directly to the first.

–J. Hudson Taylor, Oct. 17, 1869, after having served God laboriously as a missionary in China for many years, wrote a letter that expressed his experience of this union leading to fruitfulness. The following is an excerpt:

"As to work, mine was never so plentiful, so responsible, or so difficult; but the weight and strain are all gone. The last month or more has been perhaps the happiest of my life; and I long to tell you a little of what the Lord has done for my soul. I do not know how far I may be able to make myself intelligible about it, for there is nothing new or strange or wonderful—and yet, all is new! In a word, "Whereas once I was blind, now I see."

I prayed, agonised, fasted, strove, made resolutions, read the Word more diligently, sought more time for retirement and meditation—but all was without effect. Every day, almost every hour, the consciousness of sin oppressed me. I knew that if I could only abide in Christ all would be well, but I could not. I began the day with prayer, determined not to take my eye from Him for a moment; but pressure of duties, sometimes very trying, constant interruptions apt to be so wearing, often caused me to forget Him. Then one's nerves get so fretted in this climate that temptations to irritability, hard thoughts, and sometimes unkind words are all the more difficult to control. Each day brought its register of sin and failure, of lack of power. To will was indeed present with me, but how to perform I found not.

Then came the question, "Is there no rescue? Must it be thus to the end—constant conflict and, instead of victory, too often defeat?" How, too, could I preach with sincerity that to those who receive Jesus, "to them gave He power to become the sons of God" (i.e.

God-like) when it was not so in my own experience? Instead of growing stronger, I seemed to be getting weaker and to have less power against sin; and no wonder, for faith

and even hope were getting very low. I hated myself; I hated my sin; and yet I gained no strength against it. I felt I was a child of God: His Spirit in my heart would cry, in spite of all, "Abba, Father": but to rise to my privileges as a child, I was utterly powerless.

When my agony of soul was at its height, a sentence in a letter from dear McCarthy [John McCarthy, in Hangchow] was used to remove the scales from my eyes, and the Spirit of God revealed the truth of our oneness with Jesus as I had never known it before. McCarthy, who had been much exercised by the same sense of failure, but saw the light before I did, wrote (I quote from memory):

"But how to get faith strengthened? Not by striving after faith, but by resting on the Faithful One."

As I read I saw it all! "If we believe not, He abideth faithful." I looked to Jesus and saw (and when I saw, oh, how joy flowed!) that He had said, "I will never leave you."

"Ah, there is rest!" I thought. "I have striven in vain to rest in Him. I'll strive no more. For has He not promised to abide with me—never to leave me, never to fail me?"
And, dearie, He never will!

But this was not all He showed me, nor one half.

As I thought of the Vine and the branches, what light the blessed Spirit poured direct into my soul! How great seemed my mistake in having wished to get the sap, the fulness out of Him. I saw not only that Jesus would never leave me, but that I was a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. The vine now I see, is not the root merely, but all—root, stem, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruit: and Jesus is not only that: He is soil and sunshine, air and showers, and ten thousand times more than we have ever dreamed, wished for, or needed. Oh, the joy of seeing this truth! I do pray that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that you may know and enjoy the riches freely given us in Christ.

It is a wonderful thing to be really one with a risen and exalted Saviour; to be a member of Christ! Think what it involves. Can Christ be rich and I poor? Can your right hand be rich and the left poor? or your head be well fed while your body starves? Again, think of its bearing on prayer. Could a bank clerk say to a customer, "It was only your hand wrote that cheque, not you," or, "I cannot pay this sum to your hand,

but only to yourself”? No more can your prayers, or mine, be discredited if offered in the Name of Jesus (i.e. not in our own name, or for the sake of Jesus merely, but on the ground that we are His, His members) so long as we keep within the extent of Christ’s credit—a tolerably wide limit! If we ask anything unscriptural or not in accordance with the will of God, Christ Himself could not do that; but, “If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us, and...we know that we have the petitions that we desire of Him.”

The sweetest part, if one may speak of one part being sweeter than another, is the rest which full identification with Christ brings. I am no longer anxious about anything, as I realise this; for He, I know, is able to carry out His will, and His will is mine. It makes no matter where He places me, or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me; for in the easiest positions He must give me His grace, and in the most difficult His grace is sufficient. It little matters to my servant whether I send him to buy a few cash worth of things, or the most expensive articles. In either case he looks to me for the money, and brings me his purchases.

So, if God place me in great perplexity, must He not give me much guidance; in positions of great difficulty, much grace; in circumstances of great pressure and trial, much strength? No fear that His resources will be unequal to the emergency! And His resources are mine, for He is mine, and is with me and dwells in me. All this springs from the believer’s oneness with Christ. And since Christ has thus dwelt in my heart by faith, how happy I have been!”

The third dimension is *answered prayer*. Jesus says: “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (**John 15:7**). Answered prayer is itself a mark of fruitfulness—it is the life of heaven being drawn down through a branch that is rightly connected to the vine. Answered prayer must be understood in the context of this discourse—the continuation of the life and ministry of Christ. The harnessing of the name of Jesus in believing prayer is the way to greater works.

To see the great commission in our day being fulfilled, to see nations bow at the feet of Christ, the art of prayer that produces Christ-centred ends must be learnt and taught. I personally think our generation has lost the art of believing prayer that achieves God’s end on the earth. Jesus had such a fruitful ministry: Martha said about Him: *Joh 11:22 But even now I know that whatever you ask from God,*

God will give you.” He also said about himself: “And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, ‘Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.’” John 11:41-42.

Jesus emphasized to His disciples that through faith in His name, they would do the works He did—and even greater works (John 14:12). This is clearly demonstrated in Acts 2, when Peter, by faith in the name of Jesus, healed a man who had been paralyzed (Acts 3:6-7). Peter later explained that this healing happened through faith in the name of Jesus.

Using that name is like drawing from the life in the Vine to produce fruit. Jesus gave us His name to act in His stead; the fruits of that name in our hearts are works done in His authority.

Jesus said that while He was on earth, the disciples had not yet fully begun to use the name (John 16:24). Now, just as Jesus approached the Father in prayer while on earth, His disciples—united with that name—approach the Father in the same way. The love the Father had for Jesus is the same love He has for them (John 17:23). Consequently, the fruit of their ministry will reach territories Jesus Himself did not reach.

It must be clear that believing prayer in the name of Jesus is the secret of power with God. Many understand this intellectually, but the deeper question is: Do you know it by heart? Do you know how it operates in practice? Asking the Father in the name of Jesus is placing a demand for the mission on Christ’s account; doing works in His name is using His authority to confront malevolent forces and to declare His enthronement over the earth.

Believing prayer has been rightly called the prayer of power. If we truly understood what Jesus meant by believing prayer, we would shudder at our own inadequacy without Him. By partnering with Christ in His intercession, we can wield God’s power across the earth—if we grasp the principles and exercise faith.

Believing Prayer: Union, Authority, and Mission

Jesus said, “I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:12–14, NKJV), and later, “Whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you” (John 16:23–24). These passages reveal our union with Christ in believing prayer: When we use the name the Son acts; He said “I will do”. When we also pray in the name, The Father also gives, all within the believer’s union with Christ.

After His departure, Jesus told His disciples, “You will not ask Me anything in that day” (John 16:23). This indicates that believers would no longer rely on His physical presence but would approach the Father through His name. Praying in Jesus’ name is therefore not merely vocalizing words; it is an expression of abiding union with Christ, relying on His authority, presence, and mediatorial work. Every prayer is grounded in His life and power, flowing from the Vine to the branch.

Two Dimensions of Believing Prayer

Believing prayer operates in two complementary dimensions, both rooted in union with Christ:

1. **Petition and Intercession (Godward Aspect):** Prayer often begins with asking the Father to intervene according to His will. In Acts 4:24–31, the early church prayed, “Lord, why have the Gentiles raged...?” They interceded for Peter and for boldness to proclaim the gospel. The effectiveness of their prayers was the authority of Jesus’ name, the Christ-centeredness of their cry, the alignment of their petition to the purposes of Christ as revealed in scriptures, showing that prayer flows from abiding union with Him.
2. **Command and Confrontation (Spiritual Authority Aspect):** The Apostles exercised authority over malevolent forces—sickness, death, and demons. Peter’s ministry illustrates these two dimensions this beautifully: when raising Tabitha (Dorcas) from the dead, he first knelt and prayed to God, petitioning the Father (Acts 9:40), then commanded Tabitha to arise in Jesus’ name. Similarly, the

healing of the crippled man was authoritative (Acts 3:6) and that of Aeneas (Acts 9:34) demonstrate that authority is exercised in reliance on Christ through faith in His name.

Even when commanding, prayer depends entirely on union with Christ and alignment with the Father's will. The name of Jesus is the conduit of His power, authority, and presence, ensuring that prayer is effective and fruitful.

"It is Christ whom the Father always hears; God is in Christ, and can only be reached by being in Him; to be IN HIM is the way to have our prayer heard; fully and wholly ABIDING IN HIM, we have the right to ask whatsoever we will, and the promise that it shall be done unto us." ~Andrew Murray

Nb: A careful approach into John 15:7 is seen in the Appendix.

The fourth dimension of fruit is *effective witness and mission*.

The greater context of John 15 is that Jesus is sending His disciples forth to continue His work. He had spoken of greater works in John 14:12, and now in John 15:16 He says: *"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."* This is the missional dimension of fruit-bearing—going into the world, preaching the gospel, and making disciples. In the book of Acts, this mission produced visible fruit: *"the word of God grew and multiplied"* (**Acts 12:24**). Colossians 1:6 also speaks of the gospel *"bringing forth fruit...in all the world."*

In summary, fruit in the biblical sense carries two essential meanings: *character and impact*. The character is Christ-likeness—not merely moral improvement, but the very nature of Christ being expressed through the believer. The impact is missional—reaching the world for Christ. As Jesus warned in Matthew 7:16–17: *"Ye shall know them by their fruits...a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit."* Character and mission together constitute the full fruit that glorifies the Father.

V. THE FATHER'S PRUNING

5.1 The Work of the Husbandman

“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” (John 15:2). The word translated *purgeth* is the Greek word *kathairō*—to cleanse, to prune, to cut clean. It is the work of the husbandman, the vinedresser.

The vinedresser does not prune because he is indifferent to the branch—he prunes precisely because he has invested in it. He desires not just fruit, but much fruit—ABUNDANCE. This is why he keeps working on the branches. Now, in thinking about this, we must also see that pruning includes both **cutting back** and **cutting away**. It is not only shaping what is growing, but also removing what is not truly living or productive.

The metaphor does not exhaust every theological detail, we must be careful not to emphasize what Jesus never meant or explicitly stated, but it gives us a clear principle: The Father is actively involved in the life of the branch. He is not passive. He is working. He is tending. He is ensuring fruitfulness.

5.2 The Purpose of Pruning: Fullness of Receiving

In the natural vine, a branch that is left unpruned can become overgrown. Its energy is scattered. Its growth is misdirected. Its fruit is diminished.

The vinedresser therefore cuts back excess growth—not to harm the branch, but to concentrate its life. To channel the sap. To ensure that what flows from the vine is not wasted, but directed toward fruit.

The principle is this: anything that hinders the branch from fully receiving from the vine must be removed. In the spiritual life, the same applies. The Father prunes the believer to remove excesses—anything that interferes with the full flow of divine life. This includes sinful habits, worldly attachments, distractions, weights, and besetting sins. *“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.”* (Hebrews 12:1). These things do not only defile—they hinder. They restrict. They choke the flow of life.

5.3 The Instrument of Pruning: The Word and the Spirit

Jesus gives us a very important key: “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” (*John 15:3*). So the pruning is not merely external. It is deeply connected to the Word. The words of Jesus are the very words of the Father (*John 14:10, 24*).

The Father prunes primarily through His Word, by the Spirit. The Word instructs, rebukes, it convicts, it corrects and renews. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (*2 Timothy 3:16*)

So the believer is continually being pruned as the Word works within. It exposes what should not remain. And the Spirit applies that Word inwardly: “*When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin... and of righteousness.*” (*John 16:8 Cf. Rev 3:6, 13, 22 shows the Spirit convicts believers also for their wrongs*). The Spirit says what He hears from the Son; He reminds us of the words of God; He receives from the Son and reveals them to us (*John 16:13-14*).

So pruning is **word-centered and Spirit-applied**.

5.4 The Means of Pruning: The Word in Trial, Tested and Lived

The instrument of pruning is still the Word, by the Spirit. It is the Word that cleanses: “*Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*” (*John 15:3*). But we must not separate this from the place of trials and circumstances. Trials are not an alternative to the Word—they are the arena where the Word is exercised. The Word prunes, but trials press the Word into reality.

In other words, what the Word says, trials bring us into the place where we must live it and experience the power in it.

We see this clearly in the experience of Israel in the wilderness: “*He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger... that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord.*” (*Deuteronomy 8:3*)

They had heard the Word, but the wilderness was where they would **learn to live by it**. So the trial was not separate from the Word—it was the means by which the Word became life.

In the same way, when a believer passes through trials, it is not merely that something is being taken away; it is that the believer is being brought into a place where he must:

- trust the Word
- rely on the Word
- stand on the Word

What was once just heard becomes lived out reality. Test and trials are opportunities to prove God's faithfulness, to see God's word in action. Don't waste that opportunity.

"We should not shrink from opportunities where our faith may be tried. The more I am in a position to be tried in faith, the more I will have the opportunity of seeing God's help and deliverance. Every fresh instance in which He helps and delivers me will increase my faith. The believer should not shrink from situations, positions, or circumstances in which his faith may be tried, but he should cheerfully embrace them as opportunities to see the hand of God stretched out in help and deliverance. Thus his faith will be strengthened." ~ George Muller

"God delights to increase the Faith of His children. Our Faith which is feeble at first, is developed and strengthened more and more by us. We ought, instead of wanting no trials before victory, no exercise for patience, to be willing to take them from God's hand as a means. I say - and say it deliberately—trials, obstacles, difficulties, and sometimes defeats, are the very food of Faith. I get letters from so many of God's dear children who say: "Dear Brother Mueller, I'm writing this because I am so weak in faith." Just so surely as we ask to have our Faith strengthened, we must feel a willingness to take from God's hand the means for strengthening it. We must allow Him to educate us through trials and bereavements and troubles. It is through trials that Faith is exercised and developed more and more. ~George Muller

"To learn strong faith is to endure great trials. I have learned my faith by standing firm amid severe testing." ~George Muller

So trials are opportunities to practice the Word, to exercise faith in the Word, to discover that truly: *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."* (Luke 4:4)

In that sense, trials create a kind of pressure—not to destroy the branch, but to drive it deeper into the vine. In the mechanics of the flow of the sap in the vine, the evaporation on the leaves causes a negative pressure that sips in the sap in the vine. Negative pressures of life are opportunities to experience the power of the word.

Test and trials eliminate alternatives. They eliminate false dependencies—building our own cisterns, broken cisterns that hold no water. They leave the soul with one choice—to draw from Christ alone, to rest in His word alone and to give Him glory alone. So pruning analogy is not divorced from the word, it is also how God brings the believer into the **experience of the Word**.

"What prodigal waste it appears to be to see scattered on the floor the bright green leaves and the bare stem bleeding in a hundred places from the sharp knife, but with a tried and trusted husbandman there is not a random stroke in it all, nothing cut away which it would not have been a loss to keep and gain to lose." Amy Carmichael

5.5 The Cutting Away: A Solemn Reality

Jesus also speaks of another aspect: *"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away."* (John 15:2). There have been many discussions across the ages about what this means. But at the very least, the passage gives us a sober warning. There is no place in the teaching of Christ for a fruitless life that claims union with Him. This should challenge every reader. I mean all of us. Why will there be such an investment and I give no yield? It is a convicting sober reality. Is this all the fruit, I can bear seeing the one in whom I have been knitted with?

The New Testament does not give comfort to fruitlessness. A life that claims to belong to Christ and yet consistently bears no fruit stands under serious warning. It is not first a matter of theological classification—whether one argues about categories—but a matter of spiritual reality. If the vine is living, and the branch abides, fruit must come.

This is the weight of the matter.

There is no reason for fruitless Christian living if one is truly abiding in Christ. The Father is the husbandman—He is working. The Son is the vine—His life is full and flowing. The Spirit is active—applying, convicting, empowering. God has made full provision to remain fruitless is not a neutral state. *“We then... beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.”* (2 Corinthians 6:1. It is to take grace in vain. It is to resist the flow. It is to remain outside the life that has been made available.

V. ABIDING IN CHRIST

6.1 How Do We Abide in Christ?

So how do I abide in Christ? There are those few ways in which we abide. What Jesus spoke about or emphasized on fruitfulness is not so much *be fruitful, be fruitful*. It is rather: **“Abide in me, and I in you.”** (John 15:4). So the question is not first, *How do I produce fruit?* The question is, *How do I abide?* Because fruit is not commanded directly—abiding is commanded, and fruit is the result.

1. Abiding as Faith — Eating and Drinking Christ

Faith. It is trust. Faith—an ongoing faith that receives, that appropriates, that trusts, that relies on the provisions in the vine. Jesus had already spoken about this in John chapter 6:

“He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.” (John 6:56).

“As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” (John 6:57)

So how did He explain eating Him? How did He explain that? He said: *“I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”* (John 6:35). So, eating and drinking Christ is explained as coming and believing. It is an active faith of “welcoming” Christ and all of His life-giving virtues into the soul. It is savouring all that God is for us in Christ. It is basically faith in Him, trusting in Him, living in a constant

dependence on Him. It is to live by Him, as He lived by the Father. This is abiding. Not striving, but receiving. Not producing, but depending.

2. Abiding Through His Word — “My Words Abide in You”

The second is through His Word. Jesus said: *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you...” (John 15:7)*. So the way to abide in Him is by His words abiding in us. What does it mean when He says His words abiding in us? Actually, that is the major thing, because that is what we trust. This is the Word that we trust, that we depend on.

First, it means His promises. The book of John is filled with promises to those who believe:

“He that believeth on me... out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:38)

“He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” (John 6:47)

“He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

“The works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do.” (John 14:12)

“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter.” (John 14:16)

“Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name... I will do it.” (John 14:13–14)

These are not just statements. These are realities to be believed, to be received, to be lived on. Jesus is saying: let these words abide in you. Because when those words abide in you, you produce. The Word itself carries power. *“The word of God... effectually worketh also in you that believe.” (1 Thessalonians 2:13)*. So the Word does not just inform—it works with power in the soul. It produces by itself. It brings forth fruit.

It means the Word taking root. Not surface, but depth. *“That on the good ground are they... which... keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” (Luke 8:15)*. Some had no entrance. Some had no depth. Some were choked. But the good ground—the Word took root, the word entered deep. It has often been said of a man like John Bunyan that if you cut him, he would bleed Scripture—such was the depth to which the Word had taken root in him.

Oh, that you and I might get into the very heart of the Word of God, and get that Word into ourselves! As I have seen the silkworm eat into the leaf, and consume it, so ought we to do with the Word of the Lord—not crawl over its surface, but eat right

into it till we have taken it into our inmost parts. It is idle merely to let the eye glance over the words, or to recollect the poetical expressions, or the historic facts; but it is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, you come to talk in Scriptural language, and your very style is fashioned upon Scripture models, and, what is better still, your spirit is flavored with the words of the Lord.

I would quote John Bunyan as an instance of what I mean. Read anything of his, and you will see that it is almost like the reading the Bible itself. He had read it till his very soul was saturated with Scripture; and, though his writings are charmingly full of poetry, yet he cannot give us his Pilgrim's Progress—that sweetest of all prose poems—without continually making us feel and say, “Why, this man is a living Bible!” Prick him anywhere—his blood is Bibline, the very essence of the Bible flows from him. He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God. I commend his example to you, beloved.¹ (Charles Spurgeon)

That is the picture. The Word sinking deep. Becoming our reality, our consciousness, even our subconscious.

Then it also means abiding in His Principles, teachings—His commandments, His ways—becoming our life. “*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.*” (John 15:10) “*Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.*” (James 1:22). So the Word is not just heard. It is internalized. It becomes life. It becomes practice.

And then His Plans—mission. His Word carries His heartbeat.

“I came... not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” (John 6:38)
“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)

So His mission becomes our mission. What moves Him begins to move us. What He longs for becomes our longing. To abide in His word is to remain in all he has revealed about His ongoing mission on the earth. All that Christ desires—let it be your desire. All that His heart beats for—let it beat in your heart.

¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/do-you-bleed-bibline/>

3. Abiding in His Love — Continuing in His Love

The other part of this abiding is love—walking in love, continuing in love. Jesus said: *“Continue ye in my love.”* (John 15:9) and again *“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.”* (John 15:10)

First of all, it begins with understanding His love toward us: *“Having loved his own... he loved them unto the end.”* (John 13:1). *“Thou... hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”* (John 17:23). It is first to know His love; *“We love him, because he first loved us.”* (1 John 4:19)

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

So He has already shown His love. To abide in His love is to continually remember it—by the help of the Holy Spirit: *“He shall glorify me... and shall shew it unto you.”* (John 16:14). And then it becomes practical. *“Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”* (Ephesians 4:32). *“Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.”* (Ephesians 5:2). We are to love, to forgive, to give ourselves to Christ and to His people.

4. Abiding in His Joy — Living in His Joy

Then Jesus spoke about joy: *“That my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”* (John 15:11). What does it mean that His joy remains in us? It means what gives Him joy becomes what gives us joy. *“I do always those things that please him.”* (John 8:29). So abiding in joy is to delight in what He delights in. Joy is inward delight. Joy is pleasure. So Jesus is saying: let me be your pleasure, enjoy my joy: *“Delight thyself also in the Lord.”* (Psalm 37:4) To abide in joy is to live in that delight. *“Serve the Lord with gladness.”* (Psalm 100:2). And this joy flows from union: *“In thy presence is fulness of joy.”* (Psalm 16:11). And where is that presence found? In abiding. In Christ. So this joy—this life of union—becomes the secret.

NB: Prayer is a reflection of active abiding, and answers are fruits of abiding. Details on this is covered in the Appendix.

VI. THE INTENSITY OF “MUCH FRUIT”

6.1 ABUNDANT FRUIT

When Jesus speaks of fruitfulness, He does not speak casually or in minimal terms. He speaks with deliberate emphasis. Again and again in John 15, the language rises — not just fruit, but more fruit, and then much fruit.

"Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." (John 15:2)

"He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." (John 15:5)

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." (John 15:8)

The progression is intentional. Fruit. More fruit. Much fruit. This is the desire of Christ for the branch and the expectation of the Father. The believer is not called merely to exist, nor merely to produce something, but to abound — to bear much fruit. When the spies entered the land of promise, they returned with a cluster of grapes so large it had to be carried by two men:

"They cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff." (Numbers 13:23)

This was not ordinary fruit. It was abundant fruit — a testimony to the richness of the land. So the life that flows from Christ is not scanty. Therefore, the fruit must be in abundance. The believer must not, therefore, be satisfied with a small measure of fruitfulness. There must be a holy pursuit — not just to bear fruit, but to bear much fruit.

6.2. First: To Become All That God wants me to be

This is the fruit of character — inward conformity to the will and nature of God.

"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." (Philippians 1:11)

6.3. Second: To Do All That God Intends

This includes the harvest of souls, the work of the kingdom, and the extension of the life of Christ into the world.

"The harvest truly is plenteous." (Matthew 9:37)

If the harvest is great, then the fruit must be great. The believer must carry a mindset that refuses smallness and mediocrity — a mindset that presses into the fullness of what God can do through a yielded vessel. The call is not to survival, but to abundance.

The Call to Excellence

If Christ calls for much fruit, then He calls for the best — the best in who we become, the best in what we do. Not for self-glory, but for Him.

*"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."
(Colossians 3:23)*

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)

This is excellence in Christ — not perfectionism driven by self, but excellence flowing from union. And it raises a searching question: when we say “I have done my best”, have we truly done our best? For if the vine is infinite, the limitation is not in the supply. Much fruit is excellence of life, fullness of expression, abundance of Christ made visible — a life that refuses mediocrity and answers the expectation of the Father.

"Biographies have served as much as any other human force in my life to overcome the inertia of mediocrity." — John Piper

When I think of the men and women who have gone before us, and the much fruit that came out of their abiding relationship with the Lord, I am challenged to banish every excuse and silence every justification for little fruit. His supply is mighty — your fruit can abound and be in abundance. What will yours be?

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." (John 15:8)

VII. A Biblical Framework for

Christian Productivity

Five Pillars | Foundation Before Strategy

All tactics, strategies, and systems must be built on this foundation — or they collapse into self-focus.

1. You Belong to God — *The Ground of All Productivity*

The secular world says productivity is for personal happiness and fulfilment — that you belong to yourself. Scripture says otherwise. You were bought with a price. Your life is a stewardship, not an ownership. This changes everything about why you produce.

"I am the vine, you are the branches." — **John 15:5**

The world asks: How do I make a good return for myself? The believer asks: How do I make a good return for Christ, my Master?

2. Empowered by God — *The Source of All Fruitfulness*

Christian productivity is not a factory. It is a fruit tree. The produce is not manufactured — it is borne. And the source of all bearing is the vine.

"Apart from me you can do nothing." — **John 15:5**

When fruit is borne that pleases God, the glory belongs to Him. The believer does not take credit — he gives it.

3. You Exist to Glorify God — *The Purpose of All Activity*

God is objectively glorious. His glory is the shining forth of His attributes. We cannot add to it — but we can ascribe it. Through worship, through attitude, through action.

Every task done with a desire to make much of Him fulfils our created purpose. *"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit."* — **John 15:8.**

The world produces for success, comfort, and recognition. The believer produces to glorify God in all things.

4. Saved to Work for God — *The Mission Behind the Mandate*

We are not saved by works — but we are saved unto works. Good works are not the root of salvation; they are the necessary fruit of it.

God has prepared works in advance for us to walk in. Salvation restores us as image-bearers, commissioned to serve and glorify Him. *"I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit."* — **John 15:16**. *"We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand."* — **Ephesians 2:10**

This gives life a mission mindset: How do I bear more good fruit for God's glory? It translates to daily discipline — rising, studying the Word, praying, fulfilling responsibilities.

5. Accountable to God — *The Horizon of Eternity*

We will all stand before God. What we have built — whether gold, silver, and precious stones, or wood, hay, and stubble — will be tested. What remains will be rewarded.

This is not a threat. It is a clarifying truth. It burns away triviality and gives crystal-clear purpose to every day. *"Each of us will give an account of himself to God."* — **Romans 14:12** *"Your fruit should abide."* — **John 15:16**

The world says: Be productive to get more of this life. Scripture says: Be productive to gain more of the next.

FOUNDATION

You belong to God. You are empowered by God. You exist to glorify God. You are saved to work for God. You are accountable to God.

This is the framework. Everything else is built on this.

Source: *Adapted from "What Is Christian Productivity?" — Redeeming Productivity Academy, Waypoints to Well Done.*

VIII. Practical Implications of Abiding in Christ

The practical implications or applications of this discourse are many.

1. Identity and Security in Christ — *A New Mentality*

First, there is a new mentality, a new identity, a new sense of security. That I have my identity in Christ. I am in the vine. I am a branch. And that means something. That means I am not ordinary. My union with Christ determines who I am. It determines my sense of worth. My worth is not determined by what people say, not by opinions, not by human validation.

If I am God's, if I am a branch in His vine, then I have worth before Him. I am His richest investment. That is my validation. And then there is security. The Father is the husbandman. "*My Father is the husbandman.*" — **John 15:1**

He tends the vine. He watches over it. He prunes it. He is in charge of my life. "*Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*" — **John 15:2**. So my life is not left to chance. It is under divine care. That removes insecurity in time and eternity. That gives assurance, peace and rest.

2. A Sense of Purpose — *A Life That Abides Beyond Time*

Then it gives a sense of purpose. That I have been commissioned by God to bear fruit.

- › *Fruit of His likeness.*
- › *Fruit of His purposes.*
- › *Fruit that abides to eternity.*

"*I have chosen you... that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.*" — **John 15:16**

This is not a life that ends in time. This is a life that transcends time. What I do in Christ carries eternal weight. So my life is not useless.. My life is counts now and into eternity.

3. The Pursuit of Much Fruit — *A Holy Obsession*

Then there is the emphasis on bearing much fruit. Jesus did not say just bear fruit. He said: "*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.*" — **John 15:8**. So this must shape my thinking. It must shape my life. I should embrace it. I should pursue it. There must be a holy obsession — to live a life that bears much fruit. My life should not be casual. My life should not be empty. **My life should be about fruit.**

4. Daily Dependence — *A Life Drawing from the Vine*

Then there is daily dependence. Even though we are in Him, He calls us to live in daily communion, daily dependence.

"Without me ye can do nothing." — **John 15:5**

To see Him as the source of all things.

- › *To continually draw from Him.*
- › *To continually receive from Him.*
- › *To allow the sap of His life to flow through all our being.*

This is a life of:

- Daily trusting
- Daily dependence
- Daily asking

"Give us this day our daily bread." — **Matthew 6:11**

And daily knowing what He has made available in His Word.

5. A Will Lost in His Will — *A Total Alignment*

Then there is the place where the will is lost in His will. A union of will. Jesus Himself lived like this: "*Not my will, but thine, be done.*" — **Luke 22:42**. So the believer begins to think like this. Like Hannah: "*O Lord of*

hosts... if thou wilt give... then I will give him unto the Lord." — **1 Samuel 1:11**.
Give me, and I give back to You.

Everything becomes His.

- › *Your life.*
- › *Your opportunities.*
- › *Your resources.*

"Ye are not your own... for ye are bought with a price." — **1 Corinthians 6:19–20**

Union with Christ produces this mind-set. You no longer see anything as your own. You are lost in His will.

6. Enforcing the Will of God—*A Life of Believing Prayer*

Then there is the place of believing prayer. This becomes our life.

Believers are called to live a life of prayer — believing prayer. *"If ye abide in me... ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."* — **John 15:7**. To see every space, every opportunity, every moment as a place to pray. To cause the will of God to prosper on the earth; *"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."* — **Matthew 6:10**. Prayer becomes participation in God's purposes.

7. Doing What Matters—*A New Mind-set of Productivity*

Finally, a new mind-set of productivity. Productivity is not just doing many things. It is not activity for activity's sake. It is doing what matters. It is doing what glorifies God. *"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."* — **John 15:8**. It is possible to succeed and yet succeed in the wrong thing.

But this life — this abiding life — redefines success.: *"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."* — **1 Corinthians 10:31**

So productivity becomes Christ-cantered, eternity-focused, and God-glorifying.

These are the practical implications of abiding in Christ: a new identity, a secure life, a purposeful existence, a pursuit of much fruit, a life

of daily dependence, a will surrendered to God, a life of believing prayer,
and a redefined understanding of productivity.

This is the life that flows from the vine.

In Christ

A Confession of Union

Christ in me,
I in Him,
Now as one,
One with God.

Nailed with Him,
Raised with Him,
Now enthroned,
Seated on high.

He, the vine,
I the branch,
Full of sap,
Life divine.

Lives within,
Spirit of Christ,
Works in me,
The works of God.

Now in Christ,
No more lack,
All is mine,
Christ is all.

Old man dead,
Adam gone,
New man here,
Christ the Lord.

All power above

And that below,
Beneath His feet,
And so mine.

No more two,
What heaven now joins:
Christ the head,
I, His body.

His word like sap,
Now in me abides,
His love my life,
Now through me shines.

Appendix

‘If ye abide in me’

Or, The All-Inclusive Condition by Andrew Murray classic – With Christ in the school of Prayer

‘If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.’ —John xv. 7

IN all God’s intercourse with us, the promise and its conditions are inseparable. If we fulfil the conditions, He fulfils the promise. What He is to be to us depends upon what we are willing to be to Him. *‘Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.’* And so in prayer the unlimited promise, *Ask whatsoever ye will*, has its one simple and natural condition, *if ye abide in me*. It is Christ whom the Father always hears; God is in Christ, and can only be reached by being in Him; to be IN HIM is the way to have our prayer heard; fully and wholly ABIDING IN HIM, we have the right to ask whatsoever we will, and the promise that it shall be done unto us.

When we compare this promise with the experiences of most believers, we are startled by a terrible discrepancy. Who can number up the countless prayers that rise and bring no answer? The cause must be either that we do not fulfil the condition, or God does not fulfil the promise. Believers are not willing to admit either, and therefore have devised a way of escape from the dilemma. They put into the promise the qualifying clause our Saviour did not put there—‘if it be God’s will’—and so maintain both God’s integrity and their own. O if they did but accept it and hold it fast as it stands, trusting to Christ to vindicate His truth, how God’s Spirit would lead them to see the Divine propriety of such a promise to those who really abide in Christ in the sense in which He means it, and to confess that the failure in the fulfilling the condition is the one sufficient explanation of unanswered prayer. And how the Holy Spirit would then make our feebleness in prayer one of the mightiest motives to urge us on to discover the secret, and obtain the blessing, of full abiding in Christ.

'If ye abide in me.' As a Christian grows in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, he is often surprised to find how the words of God grow too, in the new and deeper meaning with which they come to him. He can look back to the day when some word of God was opened up to him and he rejoiced in the blessing he had found in it. After a time some deeper experience gave it a new meaning, and it was as if he never had seen what it contained. And yet once again, as he advanced in the Christian life, the same word stood before him again as a great mystery, until anew the Holy Spirit led him still deeper into its Divine fulness. One of these ever-growing, never-exhausted words, opening up to us step by step the fulness of the Divine life, is the Master's precious 'Abide in me.' As the union of the branch with the vine is one of growth, never-ceasing growth and increase, so our abiding in Christ is a life process in which the Divine life takes ever fuller and more complete possession of us. The young and feeble believer may be really abiding in Christ up to the measure of his light; it is he who reaches onward to the full abiding in the sense in which the Master understood the words, who inherits all the promises connected with it.

The First Stage: Faith

In the growing life of abiding in Christ, the first stage is that of faith. As the believer sees that, with all his feebleness, the command is really meant for him, his great aim is simply to believe that, as he knows he is in Christ, so now, notwithstanding unfaithfulness and failure, abiding in Christ is his immediate duty, and a blessing within his reach. He is specially occupied with the love, and power, and faithfulness of the Saviour: he feels his one need to be believing.

The Second Stage: Obedience

It is not long before he sees something more is needed. Obedience and faith must go together. Not as if to the faith he has the obedience must be added, but faith must be made manifest in obedience. Faith is obedience at home and looking to the Master: obedience is faith going out to do His

will. He sees how he has been more occupied with the privilege and the blessings of this abiding than with its duties and its fruit. There has been much of self and of self-will that has been unnoticed or tolerated: the peace which, as a young and feeble disciple, he could enjoy in believing goes from him; it is in practical obedience that the abiding must be maintained: 'If ye keep my commands, ye shall abide in my love.' As before his great aim was through the mind, and the truth it took hold of, to let the heart rest on Christ and His promises; so now, in this stage, his chief effort is to get his will united with the will of his Lord, and the heart and the life brought entirely under His rule.

The Third Stage: Full Union

And yet it is as if there is something wanting. The will and the heart are on Christ's side; he obeys and he loves his Lord. But still, why is it that the fleshly nature has yet so much power, that the spontaneous motions and emotions of the inmost being are not what they should be? The will does not approve or allow, but here is a region beyond control of the will. And why also, even when there is not so much of positive commission to condemn, why so much of omission, the deficiency of that beauty of holiness, that zeal of love, that conformity to Jesus and His death, in which the life of self is lost, and which is surely implied in the abiding, as the Master meant it? There must surely be something in our abiding in Christ and Christ in us, which he has not yet experienced.

It is so. Faith and obedience are but the pathway of blessing. Before giving us the parable of the vine and the branches, Jesus had very distinctly told what the full blessing is to which faith and obedience are to lead. Three times over He had said, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments,' and spoken of the threefold blessing with which He would crown such obedient love. The Holy Spirit would come from the Father; the Son would manifest Himself; the Father and the Son would come and make their abode. It is as our faith grows into obedience, and in obedience and love our whole being goes out and clings itself to Christ, that our inner life becomes opened up, and the capacity is formed within of receiving the life, the spirit, of the

glorified Jesus, as a distinct and conscious union with Christ and with the Father. The word is fulfilled in us: 'In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in me, and I in you.' We understand how, just as Christ is in God, and God in Christ, one together not only in will and in love, but in identity of nature and life, because they exist in each other, so we are in Christ and Christ in us, in union not only of will and love, but of life and nature too.

It was after Jesus had spoken of our thus through the Holy Spirit knowing that He is in the Father, and even so we in Him and He in us, that He said, 'Abide in me, and I in you. Accept, consent to receive that Divine life of union with myself, in virtue of which, as you abide in me, I also abide in you, even as I abide in the Father. So that your life is mine and mine is yours.' This is the true abiding, the occupying of the position in which Christ can come and abide; so abiding in Him that the soul has come away from self to find that He has taken the place and become our life. It is the becoming as little children who have no care, and find their happiness in trusting and obeying the love that has done all for them.

To those who thus abide, the promise comes as their rightful heritage: *Ask whatsoever ye will*. It cannot be otherwise. Christ has got full possession of them. Christ dwells in their love, their will, their life. Not only has their will been given up; Christ has entered it, and dwells and breathes in it by His Spirit. He whom the Father always hears, prays in them; they pray in Him: what they ask shall be done unto them.

Beloved fellow-believer! let us confess that it is because we do not abide in Christ as He would have us, that the Church is so impotent in presence of the infidelity and worldliness and heathendom, in the midst of which the Lord is able to make her more than conqueror. Let us believe that He means what He promises, and accept the condemnation the confession implies.

But let us not be discouraged. The abiding of the branch in the Vine is a life of never-ceasing growth. The abiding, as the Master meant it, is within our reach, for He lives to give it us. Let us but be ready to count all things loss, and to say, 'Not as though I had already attained; I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus.' Let us not be so much occupied with the abiding, as with Him to whom the abiding links us, and His fulness. Let it be Him, the whole Christ, in His obedience and humiliation, in His exaltation and power, in whom our soul moves and acts; He Himself will fulfil His promise in us.

And then as we abide, and grow evermore into the full abiding, let us exercise our right, the will to enter into all God's will. Obeying what that will commands, let us claim what it promises. Let us yield to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to show each of us, according to his growth and measure, what the will of God is which we may claim in prayer. And let us rest content with nothing less than the personal experience of what Jesus gave when He said, 'If ye abide in me, ask whatsoever ye will, it shall be done unto you.'

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY!

Beloved Lord! do teach me to take this promise anew in all its simplicity, and to be sure that the only measure of Thy holy giving is our holy willing. Lord! Let each word of this Thy promise be anew made quick and powerful in my soul.

Thou sayest: Abide in me! O my Master, my Life, my All, I do abide in Thee. Give Thou me to grow up into all Thy fulness. It is not the effort of faith, seeking to cling to Thee, nor even the rest of faith, trusting Thee to keep me; it is not the obedience of the will, nor the keeping the commandments; but it is Thyself living in me and in the Father, that alone can satisfy me. It is Thy self, my Lord, no longer before me and above me, but one with me, and abiding in me; it is this I need, it is this I seek. It is this I trust Thee for.

Thou sayest: Ask whatsoever ye will! Lord! I know that the life of full, deep abiding will so renew and sanctify and strengthen the will that I shall have the

light and the liberty to ask great things. Lord! let my will, dead in Thy death, living in Thy life, be bold and large in its petitions.

Thou sayest: It shall be done. O Thou who art the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, give me in Thyself the joyous confidence that Thou wilt make this word yet more wonderfully true to me than ever, because it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love Him. Amen.

NOTE

On a thoughtful comparison of what we mostly find in books or sermons on prayer, and the teaching of the Master, we shall find one great difference: the importance assigned to the answer to prayer is by no means the same. In the former we find a great deal on the blessing of prayer as a spiritual exercise even if there be no answer, and on the reasons why we should be content without it. God's fellowship ought to be more to us than the gift we ask; God's wisdom only knows what is best; God may bestow something better than what He withholds. Though this teaching looks very high and spiritual, it is remarkable that we find nothing of it with our Lord. The more carefully we gather together all He spoke on prayer, the clearer it becomes that He wished us to think of prayer simply as the means to an end, and that the answer was to be the proof that we and our prayer are acceptable to the Father in heaven. It is not that Christ would have us count the gifts of higher value than the fellowship and favour of the Father. By no means. But the Father means the answer to be the token of His favour and of the reality of our fellowship with Him. "To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant."

A life marked by daily answer to prayer is the proof of our spiritual maturity; that we have indeed attained to the true abiding in Christ; that our

will is truly at one with God's will; that our faith has grown strong to see and take what God has prepared for us; that the Name of Christ and His nature have taken full possession of us; and that we have been found fit to take a place among those whom God admits to His counsels, and according to whose prayer He rules the world. These are they in whom something of man's original dignity hath been restored, in whom, as they abide in Christ, His power as the all-prevailing Intercessor can manifest itself, in whom the glory of His Name is shown forth. Prayer is very blessed; the answer is more blessed still, as the response from the Father that our prayer, our faith, our will are indeed as He would wish them to be.

I make these remarks with the one desire of leading my readers themselves to put together all that Christ has said on prayer, and to yield themselves to the full impression of the truth that when prayer is what it should be, or rather when we are what we should be, abiding in Christ, the answer must be expected. It will bring us out from those refuges where we have comforted ourselves with unanswered prayer. It will discover to us the place of power to which Christ has appointed His Church, and which it so little occupies. It will reveal the terrible feebleness of our spiritual life as the cause of our not knowing to pray boldly in Christ's Name. It will urge us mightily to rise to a life in the full union with Christ, and in the fulness of the Spirit, as the secret of effectual prayer. And it will so lead us on to realize our destiny: 'At that day: Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in my Name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be fulfilled.' Prayer that is really, spiritually, in union with Jesus, is always answered.

ABOUT THE YOUNG MINISTERS' FORUM

The Young Ministers' Forum (YMF) is a Gospel-centered parachurch movement committed to strengthening and equipping young ministers to faithfully serve God's purpose across churches, communities, and nations.

As a parachurch platform, we exist to complement and support the local church by cultivating ministers who are spiritually grounded, doctrinally sound, missionally active, and formed in Christlike character. Through intentional fellowship, mentorship, resource development, and structured education, we provide an environment where emerging leaders can grow in clarity, conviction, and competence for lifelong ministry.

Our Vision

To strengthen and equip young ministers to serve God's purpose with clarity, conviction, and competence.

Our Mission

We fulfill our mission through the **FORGE** framework:

F – Fellowship

Cultivating authentic community where iron sharpens iron and ministers grow in unity, accountability, and shared purpose.

O – Outreach & Missions

Advancing the Gospel through evangelism, public engagement, and cross-cultural mission initiatives.

R – Resource Building

Developing and distributing biblically faithful and intellectually sound resources to serve ministers and local churches.

G – Grooming & Mentorship

Providing intentional spiritual formation, leadership development, and personal guidance for sustainable ministry impact.

E – Education

Equipping the mind and ministry through structured theological training, practical workshops, and disciplined study.