

Are You In Christ, or Are You In Christ? (Part 2)

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Preacher: Gregory Garrison

[0 : 0 0] I need my sword. That's right. We're in trouble without that. Well, I'm back. Part two. Turn your Bibles to John chapter 15. So I realized there's something this week as I was preparing and I feel in so many ways I have bitten off way more than I can chew. And I guess that's how it should be trying to teach and preach the almighty word of God, right? It's a humble place to be and perhaps that's a good thing of where I am. We're going to see if we make it through verse 11 today.

If we don't, that's fine. I'm watching my watch. I'm sure my wife is watching her watch and we may end up having a part three in a month or not next week. Right, right. Yeah, yeah, yeah. We may be here a while next week, right? When you're back. But so we're just going to open up God's word and we're going to remember a little bit from what we talked about last week. And we're going to go on through a little bit more of John 15 and where we end up, we end up. The good part is, is that in God's sovereignty and his, and his, his infinite planning, God's going to teach us just what we need to hear this morning, right? Whether it be, whether it be five minutes, one hour, five hours, right? Whatever God has prepared for us. That's what we need to hear this morning. And so, and so that's the, that's the plan. So for those of you here who, for those of you here today who were not here last Sunday, and there are several of you, we sort of set the stage, if you would, we sort of reviewed the setting and the context of chapter 15, right?

We, we talked about how it's, it's not good habit at all just to jump in the middle of scripture and just start reading, right? You're missing your context. That means you're going to misinterpret. You may misunderstand. You may not understand properly what the author intends. And so if you remember last week, we turned in chapters 15, but then we turned back a few chapters and we looked at chapter 11 and 12 and 13 to, to get that context. And so I'm just going to run through very briefly just what, what we talked about last week. Again, for those who were not here last week and for those who basically have a poor memory, I don't have a great memory. So it's probably good to hear a little bit of reminder, refresher from last week. So, so last week we learned at the end of John 11, right? We, we read in verse 55 that the Passover of the Jews was at hand. And so this section of scripture in John, it's basically the passion week, right? It's the final week of Christ on earth.

And we see in the very last verse of chapter 11 that the chief priests and the Pharisees, they're seeking to arrest Jesus, right? Jesus is in their sights. And so the, the chief priests and the Pharisees, they had given orders that if anyone knew where Jesus was, that, that he should let them know so that they might arrest him. And so there's sort of a buzz, sort of a electric charge happening in Jerusalem for this particular Passover, right? Because the, the lead, the religious leaders in this time are looking to, to capture and arrest Jesus. We turned into chapter 12 of John. And then specifically, if you, if you happen to be looking there in your Bible, the first few words of chapter 12 says six days before Passover. So, so, so isn't it neat that in this case, the apostle John, but through God's inspiration that he gives us these time markers to better understand context. And so we see that it's six days before Passover. So that means the crowds are going to be coming in from all over the land to

Jerusalem as they do each year. And we see that Jesus indeed has come, is coming into town. In the beginning of chapter 12, he sees the, we, we read that he goes to Bethany, which is a couple of miles east of Jerusalem, right? So he goes to Bethany and he's at the home of Lazarus and Martha and Mary. We see that Mary anoints Jesus feet. We read that account in chapter 12 with a very expensive ointment, a perfume, the value of which is roughly a year's wage for a common worker. And we also read last week that Judas Iscariot's there. And perhaps we don't know, it doesn't say, but perhaps all the disciples or many of them were also there in the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. And so we see that, that John tells us, he gives us a little bit of an explanation that Judas Iscariot, that he was a thief and that he used to help himself to the money bag of which he was in charge of the disciples' money bag. He was the money keeper for the disciples. And he had fussed a little bit about

[4 : 59] Mary using that expensive ointment on Jesus. And then Jesus sort of corrects Judas. But John then sort of explains, hey, we know that Judas is a thief. And he dipped his hand into the till a little bit.

So this is important to know. We're sort of framing, as we're getting ready to get into chapter 15, we're starting to get some insights into Judas. And that's important. And you all know from last week while we talked about Judas. So then in chapter 12, we kept going. It's the triumphal entry.

For those of you who may have grown up and at your church, you celebrated Palm Sunday, right? To sort of the recognition, the remembrance of the days leading up to Passover. And so Jesus comes in on a donkey. Why does he do that? So that prophecy may be fulfilled, right? The scripture is written.

And then we see later on in chapter 12, in verse 27, something very insightful about the heart, about the condition, and about what Jesus is thinking. And Jesus actually says this, and John records it. He says in verse 27, now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour, right? Jesus is saying, my soul's troubled. But shall I say, you know, Father, take this from me.

And then Jesus says, but for this purpose, I have come to this hour, right? Jesus' whole intent, his whole heart of wanting to obey God, his Father, is to come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.

[6 : 34] And so we see then the sort of the stage is getting set. We sort of see Jesus' soul is troubled. We sort of see Judas in the background, knowing that he's a betrayer, that we're going to learn a little bit more about him. We went into chapter 13, right? It's the now, the night before the feast, the night of the feast, the Passover. So this is Thursday night. This is hours away from Jesus being arrested, going through some mock trial. You all have read this, and eventually nailed to a cross and crucified, right? This is the night before. We see that in chapter 13, verse 1. The setting is the upper room. In Jesus, we read the first several verses in chapter 13, that Jesus is washing his disciples' feet, showing that in an example of servanthood, and what is to come. And then Jesus and Peter get into a talk. Remember, we talked about that last week.

Peter's like, Jesus, you're not going to wash my feet. No way. And then what does Jesus say? He says that, let me read that just so I get that right.

Jesus answered Peter, if I do not wash you, you have no share with me. All right. So then Peter says, well, okay. Then Peter says, Lord, not my feet also, only, but also my hands and my head.

And then Jesus says, and this is the part that I think we need to remember as we look ahead to chapter 15. Jesus says, the one who has bathed does not need to wash except for his feet, but is completely clean. All right. So what does Jesus mean with this concept of being completely clean?

And that's something that we're going to see again in chapter 15. All right. So as we go through chapter 13, then we read Jesus again, says, truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.

[8 : 25] So who is he referring to? Judas. Right. And then a few verses later, we read that after Judas had taken the morsel, Satan quickly, Satan entered him. And then Jesus said to Judas, what you are going to do, do quickly. And so Judas immediately went out. Again, this is in chapter 13. And so here in the upper room, as the disciples and as Jesus have sort of, they've retired to a private setting on this final night that Jesus is on the earth before he's crucified, we see these interactions and these relationships occurring. And we see that Judas is dismissed to go do what he was going to do, according to Jesus. And so the remainder, the remainder of chapter 13 and 14, since Judas is gone, then Jesus is now teaching his 11. And we, and again, we don't have time to read all that, but in chapters, the remainder of chapter 13 and 14, we see this teaching in chapter 14, he says twice, let not your hearts be troubled. All right. Well, why does he say that? Well, because the disciples' hearts are troubled. Not quite sure why Judas exited. Not quite sure why Jesus is saying that I'm going to leave you and where I go, you cannot come, right? This man that he had, that that they had followed and given their lives for three years, Jesus is telling them, I'm leaving you. And so they're troubled.

And Jesus' precious words to them, let you not your heart be troubled. And so we see that the disciples are scared, that they're anxious, they're sorrowful, they're not sure of the future. We see Jesus' soul is troubled because of this impending crucifixion that he knows is coming. He also knows that Judas was to betray him. And so he sends him out. And so that is where we are when we arrive in chapter 15.

So in chapter 15, let me read the first two verses. And then again, we'll, we'll review what we talked about last week. So chapter 15, verses one and two, Jesus says, I am the true vine and my father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes that it may bear more fruit. And so we see that Jesus uses these metaphors, right? Who's the true vine? Jesus. Who's the vine dresser? God, the father. Who are the non fruit bearing branches, right? False believers. And we'll talk about that in just a minute. Who are the fruit bearing branches? True believers. And that's what we're going to focus in on today in the main part of this sermon. When Jesus calls himself the true vine, right? He's, he's, he's differentiating or distinguishing himself from Israel, right? So all throughout the Old Testament, Israel is a common symbol for,

I mean, the vine is a common symbol for Israel. And Jesus said, I am the true vine, not the fact that you're descended from Abraham, right? Not because of your association, your lineage with Israel. Jesus, I am the true vine, not your following and obeying Jewish laws and rules and regulations. Jesus says, I am the true vine, not any other sort of false teaching that was prevalent during that time. And if you've studied New Testament scripture, you've probably read about Gnosticism and other sorts of false teachings that were permeating into the, to the church, into the area. Jesus is saying, no, I am the true vine. I am your nourishment. I am your sustenance for everlasting life. Everything that you need will come from your connection with me. That's what Jesus means when he says that I am the true vine. And then the second half of verse one, you know, my father is the vine dresser. Again, we learned last week that the vine dresser, at least as is described here in Jesus' teaching, that the vine dresser has two main responsibilities, right? And what are they?

They're to take away the fruitless branches and then they're to prune the fruitful branches. So he cuts away the lifeless and then he cultivates the living. He prunes, he judges, and he disciplines.

[13 : 05] And then last week we also grappled with, well, how can that be? How can a branch be in him? How can a branch be in the vine? But yet, Jesus, you're explaining that God, the father, the vine dresser takes it away.

Does that mean that if I'm in you, if I'm a believer, that I can lose that relationship with you, that I can lose the eternal life that I think that I have in you? And so it's a little bit troublesome. And so we took pains last week and took some time to sort of think through what exactly Jesus was teaching.

We allowed scripture to interpret scripture, right? To guide us into a clear understanding on this seemingly troublesome point. I didn't use the phrase scripture, interpreting scripture last week. But what I mean by that is as we interpret scripture, right, as we learn and try to understand what scripture has to say, the fancy word for this is hermeneutics, right? The study of hermeneutics, the study of scripture and understanding that when we say that we allow scripture to interpret scripture, we interpret the implicit by the explicit, right? That's a proper approach to studying God's word. We interpret the implicit, the part that's not quite clear to us, that may be a little cloudy or that may conflict with sort of what we understand, right? We go to the explicit, clear teachings in other parts of scripture that are black and white, right? And from those clear teachings, then we sort of compare and test what other parts of scripture say. You all know scripture is inerrant.

Scripture does not conflict with itself. And so as we approach scripture and especially those areas that, especially on first reading, it's like, well, wait a minute, did I read that correctly? Is that what that really says? A very good approach, a biblical approach is again, to allow scripture to interpret scripture, to go to what you know and what's clear in scripture. This is not playing word games. I was thinking last week about this, that I hope and I pray that what I shared last week and especially this topic about do branches who are in him, you know, can they be taken away? We learned, we talked about eternal security and the perseverance of the saints. I'm hoping no one walked away thinking, Greg, he's playing word games, right? He's twisting words around to make it fit what he means and what he intends to teach. And I pray that that is not the case. And if it is, you hold me accountable. If you ever, right, and I think Jeff's the same way, you hold us accountable. If there is something that we teach that sort of raises a red flag, you are invited, you are, you are welcome to come chat with us about that. So we can sit down together and work through what the scripture has to say. But we do allow scripture to interpret scripture. We do take what's clear about what the teaching is. And we apply that into parts of the scripture that, that maybe are a little bit harder to understand. And so we did that last week, right?

And I'll just run through real quickly as I finish up the, sort of the review from last week. We first looked at trying to understand this branch and the vine dresser taking away branches that are in him, that are in the vine. And we first looked at John 17, six, and clearly in John 17, six, this is when Jesus high priestly prayer. This is at the end of this upper room sort of setting when they go. And when Jesus is praying to his father, we read that God, the father has called a people in John 17, six, you can see that. And God, the father has given this chosen people, these elect, if you would, has given them to his son. Then in John 6, 37 through 39, we also learned that Jesus will never cast them out. That those who God, the father gives to God, the son, that Jesus will never cast them out and he will lose none of them, not one branch. And then we turned over to John 10 and looked at more clear teaching in scripture. And in John 10, we read that Jesus' sheep or his flock, again, the chosen, the chosen ones, that they hear his voice and they follow him. He gives them eternal life. They will not perish and no one will snatch them from his hand. So it's clear just in those three references in John 17 and John 6 and in John 10, again, we are looking to understand the explicit, the clear teaching of what this says. And it's clear in this teaching that those who are truly in him, that they cannot have their eternal life taken away. They can't be snatched away. It can't be given away. It will not be taken from them. It's clear that one cannot become a true and genuine disciple and then subsequently lose that gift, right? The old has gone. The new has come, right? You have eternal life. And we'll talk about that a little bit more a little later. So if that's the case, then what does John 15 to me? What does Jesus mean? That God, the father, the vine dresser, the vine dresser is taken away branches. And so we looked at other scripture in John and we learned that, hey, there is a concept that there are disciples that aren't true disciples. We see examples of that in scripture. So we turn to John 8 and again, you don't have to turn there. I'm just quickly sort of reviewing from last week. In John 8, John writes, many believed in him, right? That's verse 30, chapter 8, verse 30. Many believed in him. And then a little bit later in verse 31, the next verse,

[19:12] Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, right? So we see references in scripture that there are those who believed in Jesus. And it says here, Jesus even spoke to the Jews who had believed in Jesus.

So there's clearly believers there, right? And Jesus said, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples. If you abide in my word, those of you who believe in me, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples. And then if you turn a few more verses over to verse 37, then Jesus says to the same group, I know your offspring of Abraham, yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you, right? So that account right there, that example is where we see those who are clearly referred to as believing in Jesus. However, they're not truly believers, right? Because Christ's word does not abide in them. And then we turn to John 66 and Jesus says, and this is after teaching about him being the bread of life, it says in John 66, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. Who turned back? Scripture says many of his disciples. Apparent disciples, perhaps those that were sort of intrigued, maybe sort of enamored with what Jesus was doing, you know, his signs, his miracles, and his wonders. For whatever reason, those who in scripture are referred to as disciples, they turned back and no longer walked with Jesus. And so we see that there is a kind of disciple, a kind of attachment or association to Jesus that's a disciple, but not a true disciple, right? There's a kind of believing or following, but not true followers. There are those who are in Christ who are truly not in Christ. Okay? We see those examples in scripture. And so when we realize that that's the case, then John 15 verses 1 and 2 start to become clear. Like, ah, okay, this metaphor that Jesus is teaching his disciples, these branches that are no longer bearing fruit. The vine dresser takes them away. Ah, those must be like those disciples that are really not true disciples, right? That on the outside, they have this appearance of following, this appearance of association, but they're really not true followers. And who is one of the prime examples of this type of person? Judas, right? And that's why I sort of kept bringing up Judas in some of the previous chapters, right? Judas, one of the 12. He's an example of someone who was in him, but not truly in him. From all outward appearances, he was a true disciple. He appeared to be a true believer, but scripture points out that he was false, that he was a betrayer. He's a clear example of who Jesus was referring to as a fruitless branch who was superficially attached to the true vine. I read one Bible commentator that said, you know,

Judas is an example of being a professor, but not a possessor, right? Right? These false teachers, false disciples, they profess relationship, belief, faith, perhaps. They probably live it. They profess their following to Jesus, but they don't possess eternal life. And so I thought that was a good sort of play on words. That's not original for me. I read that and I thought, oh, that was worth sharing with you. So this is a good example of those who may profess, but they don't possess.

And so that was in review is what we talked about last week. Let's read now our full account in John 15, verses 1 through 11, and then I'll pray, and then we'll get into the next few verses in this section.

So John 15, verses 1 through 11. I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, He takes away. That's the Judas branch. And every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

[24 : 03] Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine. You are the branches.

Whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers, and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. Again, that's referring to the Judas branch, right? The fruitless branches.

Verse 7. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Let's pray. Let's pray. So Father, we thank you for your word. Fathers, I have studied this, Lord. I am so grateful that you allow us a peek, a view, into this intimate setting with you and your disciples, hours before you are to be crucified.

Father, I pray that you would open ears and hearts and minds to receive your mighty truth that we read and study this morning.

[25 : 47] Father, we read in Scripture that all of the Scripture, all of your words, that are breathed out by you, and that they're profitable for teaching and reproof and for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God, that we, Father, that we may be competent, equipped for every good work.

So Lord, I pray that you would equip us this morning, just as Jeff prayed and discussed. Father, would you equip us to be counselors and to be disciplers to one another, that we would bring words of Scripture to bear in the lives of one another.

So equip us as we open your word. Father, we know that your word is sharper and living and active than any two-edged sword. Father, your Scripture says that your word pierces to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and that your word discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

So, Father, I pray that as we open your word this morning, that you would do surgery on our hearts, Lord, that you would bring to our minds our thoughts and our intentions. Father, we thank you that your word is living and active.

We open your word, eagerly anticipating for you to change us. Father, in Isaiah, you tell us that as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there, but water the earth, making it to bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall your word be that goes out from your mouth.

[27 : 22] And your word shall not return to you void or empty, but it shall accomplish that which you purpose and shall succeed in the thing for which you sent it. So, Lord, I thank you now, before we even get into this study, that your word will accomplish that for which you purpose, and it will succeed in the thing in which you sent it for.

Thank you for your word, Lord, and thank you for our time together. In Christ's name, amen. Amen. All right, so John 15, second half of verse 2.

So, let me read that again. You all ready? Got your seatbelts on? Got your pens out? Here we go. All right. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away.

Okay, here's the second part. And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. My brothers and sisters in Christ, if you're a genuine believer, you know by now, I've repeated it multiple times, that you are the fruitful branch.

And it may not be exciting to hear. You may be sort of cringing a little bit, but we are to be pruned. Jesus teaches us that we are to be pruned.

[28 : 38] What is pruning? We talked a little bit about this last week, right? So, when something's pruned, what happens? It's cut away. It's pulled away so that something may grow more.

In this case, so the branches would be more fruitful. More specifically, that we as believers in Christ, that we will bear more fruit. Pruning.

Doesn't sound fun, does it? I mean, I know that I don't, I haven't pruned vineyards before, but I know that several of you here in your homes and around your area, right?

You've got wooded areas, right? You not only pruned, you actually cleared out, right? You have a wooded area, Jeff has a wooded area behind his house, and he made that wooded area so clean and nice because you're cutting and you're taking away.

At home, I've got these tree loppers where I try to trim the branches. I prune the trees that are hanging over, and as I just think about the lopper and the other instruments that are used, it's painful, right?

[29 : 42] It's painful. It cuts. It's uncomfortable to realize that we are to be pruned by our loving Father, right? It sounds uncomfortable, unpleasant at best, and just downright painful at worst.

So, it's a sobering, right? It's sobering. So, hold your place in John 15, and let's turn over to Hebrews 12. I do want to, I want us to look at what the writer of Hebrews says about this pruning, right?

This discipline that we are to expect from God the Father. In Hebrews 12, and I'll read from verses 5 to 11. Hebrews 12, 5 through 11.

And the writer writes, And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? And then he quotes from Proverbs 3. We went over this in the call to worship.

My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.

[30 : 53] It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. Isn't that beautiful? God is treating you as his son.

For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

So if you are feeling no pruning, if you are feeling no discipline from God the Father, take note of verse 8.

Verse 9. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?

For they disciplined us for a short time, as it seemed best to them. But he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. Ah, what's one of the reasons why we're pruned?

[31 : 55] Ah, that we may share his holiness. Verse 11. For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant. But later, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

And so the writer of Hebrews encourages us that you're going to be pruned, you're going to be disciplined, but hey, God is treating you.

May that be an assurance to you that you're a son of God. And he does it because he loves you. Verse 6. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves. That's beautiful.

Verse 11. But later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Again, echoes what Jesus is teaching in chapter 15, right? It's yielding fruit.

Pruning yields fruit. Now one way that God the Father prunes or cuts or disciplines us, if you would, is via persecution. And that's the context here if we were to look back a verse or two.

[33 : 00] Verse 3. Consider him who, and this is Jesus, Consider to him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted.

So the context of this particular chapter in Hebrews is referring to persecution. But there are other ways, you know this, that God prunes you, that prunes us, right?

It could be sickness. It could be hardship. It could be loss of material goods. It could be loss of a loved one. Or some other personal grief or agony or discouragement.

Again, pruning is painful. So I want to stop right now. And usually as I go through sermons, we sort of talk about the doctrine, then we look at application.

But I'd like to weave in application just a little bit throughout this. And so I would ask at this point, are you being pruned right now? How's your attitude?

[34 : 01] Right? You got sort of a stinky attitude? Are you complaining? Are you grumbling about the pruning that you're going through? Again, it's painful and it's uncomfortable. And what should your attitude be?

Is there any encouragement that you can find in the fact that God the Father is taking you through a hard circumstance right now? Be encouraged that He just might very well be pruning you so that you will bear more fruit.

As the writer of Hebrews says, it will yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Right? Don't miss the opportunity of training when you're being pruned by whatever life circumstance that you have.

Usually God brings trials and troubles into our lives that have a way of uncovering a problem. Maybe exposing the problem so that He can work on it and work on you.

So again, submit to the training of that pruning. Right? It may not be the actual circumstance, but that circumstance may reveal the actual root problem.

[35 : 21] Right? It might not be that you got a flat tire or you got a car accident. Right? It's not that He was trying to teach a lesson about the car. He wants to expose how you're responding to that.

Right? What's truly in your heart. Right? So sometimes pruning itself will expose the real issue. And so as backward as this sounds, as believers in Jesus Christ and as trusters of God the Father, we are to embrace pruning.

All right? It's easier for me to say. Right? But when we actually go through it, that's hard. That's hard. But remember and be encouraged that that's the case.

You know, again, the context going back to John 15, Jesus is both instructing the 11. Right? Judas is left. He's instructing the 11. And He's actually giving them hope and encouragement.

Right? If we were to look at verse 20 of chapter 15 in John, He says, Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master.

[36 : 33] If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. Right? So Jesus is teaching them and warning them, trying to get them prepared for what is to come. But then He's also giving them hope.

He's saying, God the Father is the vine dresser. He's the one who's pruning, but He's got it all under control. Right? He knows what He's doing. Rest and relax, if you would, in God's sovereign purpose of Him pruning you.

There is purpose for that. Hebrews 12, 11, again, yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. In John 15, 2, that you may bear more fruit.

Have I persuaded you? Have I convinced you? There is good purpose in pruning. Not comfortable. Painful. Inconvenient.

Maybe even shameful, as it exposes areas of your heart that you'd rather not have exposed. But embrace that pruning. Be trained by it.

[37 : 45] So John 15, 2 says, you know, that it may bear more fruit. Well, let's stop a minute and let's ask, okay, well, do I have to bear more fruit? Why bear more fruit? I got to think about that.

On the surface, it sounds, let's bear more fruit. But have we thought about why we bear more fruit? What's the purposes of bearing more fruit? Pruning is to bear more fruit, but what's the purposes of more fruit?

We will get to that in just a minute. All right. So stand by for the answer to that one. All right. Turn to 2 Corinthians, if you would, before we move on on this topic.

2 Corinthians chapter 1. Again, I want to encourage you that though pruning is painful, that again, there is purpose and there is beauty in that.

And we see this worked out in Paul's life. So 2 Corinthians chapter 1. And let me read just a couple of verses. Verses 8 through 10. So 2 Corinthians chapter 1, 8 through 10.

[38 : 48] And this is what Paul writes. He says, For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction that we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.

Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead.

He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us. On Him we have set our hope that He will deliver us again.

Hallelujah. Huh? Isn't that great? Isn't that great? We see this working out, the pruning and the affliction. And I don't know that I've ever been brought to the point.

You know, Paul describes this. Utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. I'm hard pressed to find anything in my life.

[39 : 53] I haven't had the loss of a child. But I can see if the Lord would take one of my children. I can see where I may feel like that. And perhaps there's other circumstances that would bring us to our knees and feel utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.

But I love that Paul gives God all the grace, all the testimony, all that. You know, He delivered us, and He will deliver us again. On Him we have set our hope.

And so if you're a Bible underliner, I mentioned this last week, right? Underline, circle that line, right? Verse 10. And also underline those references in verse 8.

Our utterly burdened beyond our strength, we felt like we'd received the sentence of death. And then, underline, highlight, God is faithful. Last week we sang great is thy faithfulness, right?

God is faithful. He delivered us. And we will set our hope in Him. And He will deliver us again. So we see this particular teaching of Jesus played out in Paul's life.

[41 : 06] All right. If you're taking notes, this is great biblical discipleship, biblical counseling material, right? You're going to come alongside a friend. It may be that you have to come alongside a brother and sister in Christ here in this church family who is despairing about some circumstance in his or her life.

Don't you think this reference in 2 Corinthians, wouldn't that be salve to a balm? Balm? Salve? Is that it? Yeah. Healing salve to that.

All right. That, hey, Paul was at the point of, you know, death, if you were. But God delivered. This is great stuff. This is what Jeff was talking about earlier. This is just biblical counseling, right?

Discipleship is just bringing to bear in one's life what Scripture says. All right. And this is why we're here this morning, to be equipped with that information. All right. So turn back to John 15, if you would.

Let's take a look at verse 3. John 15, verse 3. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

[42 : 11] So, in the context of 15, verses 1 and 2, right, he's bringing this metaphor of the vine and the branches and the vine dresser.

And he was, you know, pruning and taking away so that all sort of makes sense and it's all related. And then Jesus says, sort of seemingly out of the blue, already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

What? What? You are clean. What's that have to do with branches and vines and pruning and what have you? And so, I want to make the connection. Now, I didn't have sermon slides last week, but today I've got a couple of them for you.

So, this is one of the slides that I have for you. So, for those who may not be able to see some of the words on here or for those maybe listening to an audio version of this sermon online, I'll try to talk and explain what I'm looking at.

But what I did is I looked up the word clean, right? Already you are clean. Just to understand, what's Jesus talking about?

[43 : 14] It's got to be related, right, to pruning and what have you. And so, for those of you, and I don't know Greek, all right, and I can't pronounce Greek. I'll probably butcher this. But if you look up that word here highlighted there on the second line, it's katharos.

I think that's how you pronounce that, or hopefully I'm close to that. All right, that's the Greek word for clean in verse 3. And if you look at one of the definitions of katharos, it says here, Well, isn't that exactly what Jesus is saying, right?

When Jesus is saying, you are clean, right, because of the word, He's saying you're like a vine that's being, or a branch, if you will, that's being cleansed by pruning.

And you're being fitted to bear fruit. So it's like, ah, so there's something about pruning here. So then I looked at the word prune in verse 2.

So I'm sort of curious, what's the association between clean and prune? And so that's the word on the right. And it's katharo, I think, again, if I'm pronouncing that right.

[44 : 30] And if we look at the definition of that particular word, and notice how similar it is to katharos, you know, katharo, Iro maybe. And the definition, one of the definitions is to prune trees and vines from useless shoots.

Well, again, that's exactly what Jesus is teaching, right? The pruning that's taking place. And so there's also one other thing here on this definition of prune.

And it relates, you see where it says from 2513? That's the Strong's number, an easy way to reference Greek words for those who aren't Greek literate. So Strong's number 2513, well, what number is that?

Well, hey, looky there. It refers to the word that's used as clean in verse 3. And so light bulb moment, aha, this makes sense now.

When Jesus is talking about that you are already clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. You are already pruned. You are already fit, fitted to bear more fruit.

[45 : 38] Now, again, for those of you who keep your yards clean, or for any of you who may have grapes growing in your backyard, this actually makes sense, right? Because as you prune things, you're making things clean, right?

You're cleaning up your particular landscape setting or what have you. And so even without the Greek, you can get that as well. But it's interesting that looking at the Greek words, it's clear that there's a wordplay here between prune and clean.

All right? So in summary, Jesus didn't introduce some unrelated concept or topic in verse 3. He says, you are pruned, you are clean, you are fitted to bear fruit.

Do you remember in our opening when I was referring to John 13 about Jesus and Peter talking? And remember what Jesus said to Peter? He says, the one who has bathed does not need to wash except for his feet, but he's completely clean.

He's completely clean. And here we're drawing the parallel with you're saved. You're a genuine believer. You're a fruitful branch.

[46 : 47] You're completely clean. And because you're completely clean by the word, because you're a fruitful branch, I will continue to prune so that you may bear more fruit.

One commentator, one Bible commentator put it this way. He said, it's if our willingness or acceptance to be washed, right, that Peter and Jesus, or to be pruned, what we see in John 15, that it gives evidence externally and assurance internally or inwardly that we are already clean.

I don't have that on a slide, but let me repeat that. It's as if our willingness or acceptance to be washed or to be pruned, right, that's why I mentioned earlier, embrace the pruning, embrace the cleaning, that it gives evidence externally to the world, and it also gives assurance internally to the believer that you're already clean, that you already have eternal life, that you're truly a genuine believer.

No need to worry about whether you're a disciple but not a true disciple. Right? That's an evidence. That's a point of application. If you're not embracing the pruning that God does in your life, again, I would consider seriously whether you're a true disciple or one just sort of along for the ride.

All right. So let me button up verse 3 because I know we need to keep moving because of time. I want to make one more observation. So verse 3, as we button it up. So I sort of focused on the clean part, but verse 3, Jesus also says, already you are clean, but why?

[48 : 39] Because of the word that I have spoken to you. Because of the word that I have spoken to you. What's that? It's the gospel, right?

The gospel, the words that he has spoken. Believing the spoken word of Christ is what connects us. It grafts us in, if you would, taking this metaphor, in as fruitful branches to the life and the nourishment and the vitality of the true vine.

Earlier in John 5, 24, Jesus says, Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life.

He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. Notice that's past tense, right? It already happened. When you believed in him, you gained eternal life.

He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. The word does that. You don't get eternal life in the future.

[49 : 50] When you die, you have eternal life now. And that's what Jesus is saying when he says, You are clean because of the word. You are clean. You are a true believer.

You are a fruitful branch. You have eternal life. You are clean. All right.

Let's move on to verses 4, 5, and 6. And we may, we'll stop at 4, 5, and 6. All right. Well, let's go through 4, 5, and 6, and then we'll wrap up. So part three in a couple of months or weeks or however long.

All right. So verses 4, 5, and 6. Let me read those. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

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

[50 : 59] What word did you keep hearing multiple times in those three words? Abide, right? So I counted, I use the ESV, English Standard Version, and I counted five times the word abide appears in verses 4, 5, and 6.

If we were to count our full scripture reference this morning, verses 1 through 11, I counted ten times that abide is mentioned. So I suppose we need to spend a little time talking about what abide means and make sure that we understand biblically what Jesus is teaching.

And so if we were, I don't have a slide for this. If we were to look at the word, the Greek word for abide, it's meno, M-E-N-O, meno. And it's a primary verb, but here's what the definition of that word means, abide.

It means to stay in a given place, to remain, to continue in, to dwell, to endure, to be present.

Man, I love that definition. Right? When Jesus says abide in me, he's basically saying remain in me, continue in me, dwell with me, endure.

[52 : 12] Because of the pruning, endure with me. Be present. Stay in a given place. So you remember that quote that I just read just a minute ago about the commentator?

He put it this way, right? It's as if our willingness or acceptance to be washed or pruned gives evidence externally and assurance internally that we're already clean.

So I think we can clean that up a little bit if he would allow us. Now that we sort of looked at the word abide a little bit, and maybe a better way to say that is this way.

We can say that our abiding gives evidence of our salvation and that it's already taken place. Abiding would be the evidence of our salvation.

Not the other way around. True, Jesus is saying abide in me. That's an imperative. That's a command for us. But let's don't get it backward. He's not calling you to abide in order to get salvation, to earn eternal life.

[53 : 19] That's backward. He's saying because you are clean, because you are a true believer, because you are saved, ah, now abide with me.

Stay plugged into me as a branch is to the vine. Okay? I like to use sort of like the engine and caboose analogy, right, when talking about, you know, our works for salvation or our works as a result of salvation, right?

And so be sure and keep the caboose behind the engine, right? The engine is your salvation. You are saved. And therefore comes the good works, the fruit, the expressions of our love and our worship and our admiration for Jesus.

And that's what Jesus is saying here. Abide in me. Jesus is saying, I know that you're scared and unsure of the future, right?

He's talking to his disciples. Abide in me. Jesus tells them, as they hated me, they're going to hate you. Abide in me.

[54 : 29] You will be persecuted. Abide in me. You will be betrayed. Abide in me. You're going to want to quit.

Abide in me. Verse 3, You are already clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me. Abide in me. Jesus is saying that I am with you.

Stay connected to me. I am the true vine and you are the true branches. If I had to use my own words that I think about maybe as I've talked with my family and my sons, I've probably, or even at work with my employees, I've probably said things like this.

Stay the course. Stand firm. Stick with it. Don't abandon what you know is true.

Right? These are all sort of different ways of expressing abide in Christ. If we look closer at verse 4, just like a branch cannot bear fruit if it's not connected to the vine, you cannot bear fruit if you're not connected to Jesus.

[55 : 49] Right? That's just what Jesus is teaching. Now, some of you may be going, well, wait a minute. Now, you beg to differ a little bit on this verse.

Right? Unless, let's see, as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine. Well, hey, I know lots of unbelievers who are generating all sorts of fruit.

They're successful. They're philanthropic. Right? They're doing good in the world. That's a reality. We observe that. We see that. But this verse, when Jesus says, you cannot, let's see, you cannot bear fruit by, as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you.

Right? So he's referring to spiritual fruit. Right? Fruit that has eternal significance. I think most of you picked up on that, but I thought that was worth mentioning.

Right? You know, for apart from me, you can do nothing of eternal value. That clarifies things a little bit.

[57 : 00] Does it change your perspective on that a little bit? Especially for those of us who are a little bit more independent or self-sufficient. Right? Right? It's very tempting, right, to say, I got this.

Right? Isn't it? I mean, even as believers, I don't need, I don't need your help. I got this. I can handle this. Right? There's so many of us in this church. I know. I'm not going to look at any one particular person because I don't want to put you on the spot.

Right? But, but we are a people. I love this church. You're go-getters. You're doers. You're problem solvers. Right? You're independent. You can get the work done. But just remember that in that strength, oh, don't be tempted to do it on your own, detached from your Lord Jesus Christ.

Right? Don't do that. It's very tempting to let pride slip in, even unknowingly. And before we know it, we're getting a great deal done and accomplished, but not for eternal purposes, not for eternal value, not for eternal significance.

So don't do that. We can accomplish much apart from Christ, but it will be of no eternal value. Well, verse 5 also says that if you're connected to me, not only will you bear fruit, but you will bear, what's your Bible say?

[58 : 20] Much fruit. Right? And why are you going to bear much fruit? Well, we've already talked about that because you're being pruned. Right? You're being pruned. You're going to continue to bear much fruit. So no abiding, no eternal fruit.

Abiding, not just fruit, but much fruit. All right? So let's abide. In verse 6, we reviewed a little bit last week because verse 6 is connected to verse 2 about the unfruitful branches.

Right? If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers, and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

Again, sobering, sobering thoughts. We talked a little bit about that last week. An application. Are you a fruitless branch? Are you a fruitful branch? My brothers and sisters, I've got three or four more pages to go, but I know it's time.

You have sat so nicely. So let me just jump to the conclusion of at least this section. Verses 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 are some just beautiful verses in Jesus' teaching of his disciples, and maybe we'll get to that in the future.

[59 : 27] Read that. Study that. It talks more about why we bear fruit. Let me read it just in concluding because I don't want to finish up this morning without just reading those once again.

So verse 7, If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. So think about prayer. And think about the conditions there. You need to abide in him and his words and to abide in you.

That's the key of answered prayer. Verse 8, By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit, and so prove to me by disciples. Our, the sort of byline if we use for our church, if you go to our website, is for the greater glory of God, right?

And so how does this church give glory to God? How do you individually give glory to God? Right here, By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit, and you prove to me by disciples.

Does this church want to give God glory? Do you individually in your lives want to give God glory? Then you need to bear much fruit, and that proves that you are a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. That's what brings.

[60 : 33] That's not the only thing, but Jesus teaches that's what brings glory to God. Verse 9, As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you, abided in my love. As the Father has loved me, that's perfect love, right?

God the Father is perfect. As God the Father has perfectly loved the Son, what's Jesus say? Jesus says, hey, hey branch, hey true branch, true disciple, I have perfectly loved you.

Isn't that encouraging? In the midst of pruning, go to this verse. If you're counseling someone, if you're discipling someone, say, hey, I know you're going through a tough time, but Jesus Christ has perfectly loved you.

He has said it, He's taught His disciples, and He died on the cross, and He conquered the grave. He's perfectly loved us. He perfectly loved and loves us.

Verse 10, If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love. You want to know how to abide? Be obedient. All right? Be obedient. And in verse 11, These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

[61 : 32] Jesus sort of wraps it up by saying, these words I've spoken, this teaching, why have I shared this with you disciples, and by extension to us, right? Because He wants His joy to be full, and His joy in us to be full.

He wants us to be a joyful people. Are you joyful people? Only when things are going well? Are you joyful people in the midst of pruning? Huh. Yeah.

This is why Jesus teaches us these feasts of words and truth. He wants us to be a joyful people. His joy made complete. I know I'll rush to the last four verses.

We can slow down maybe in the future, but that's some application for those verses. Oh, I've got so much more to share with you. I know I bit off more than I could chew.

But be thinking about, let me take just a moment. I'm just going to have us just, I'm going to pray, but I'm going to just be silent for 10 or 15 seconds, 20 seconds. And I want you just to think about, what are you going to glean from this teaching from Jesus?

[62 : 35] All right. Maybe it's pruning. We talked about that. Maybe it's just, oh man, I'm just, I'm so thankful to hear that Jesus loves me perfectly. I may not understand it. I may not grasp it. But I so much appreciate that.

Whatever. Would you just commune with the Lord for about 10 or 15 seconds? We can bow our heads, eyes closed if you want. And then I will close this in prayer. So let's pray. Lord, we consider your word and your teaching so precious to us.

And Father, we trust, we rely on the fact that you change our hearts. You transform our hearts through the word.

Lord, help us, Lord, for the things that we've learned this morning, Father, to apply those, to understand those, to live in sight of those truths.

Father, I pray for each person here, for maybe our church family who's not here with us this morning, who may be listening to a recording of the sermon. Lord, I would pray that we would better understand how to abide in you.

[64 : 08] And oh, Father, as I prayed last week, Lord, if there's anyone here in the sound of my voice, in the sound of maybe this sermon recording, that does not know you.

Father, that they would understand that it's terrifying to think that you're going to take that branch away, that unbelieving branch away, that you're going to destroy it.

Father, you have judgment coming for those who have not accepted you as Lord and Savior. So as we prayed last week, when we considered this teaching, Lord, I lift up the same prayer to you, Father.

Open eyes that are blind and ears that are blocked. Oh, Father, in your wonderful grace and your mercy, Lord, would you bring salvation to those who do not know you, Father.

Father, it's all your grace. It's all your magnificent, wonderful, sovereign will. May today be that day, Lord, where an individual who perhaps is playing church or playing religion, that he or she would truly understand your beautiful truth and your perfect love for him or her, Father.

[65 : 27] For those of us who know you, Lord, again, help us to abide. Help us just to remain, to be still, to stay.

When the storms come of pruning, when grief comes at certain stages or circumstances in life, Father, help us to run the race, Father, to have endurance, not on our own strength, Lord, but again, through your perfect abiding and your perfect love.

Thank you, Father, that you give us this wonderful opportunity to open your word, that we can just listen to your beautiful word, not Greg's words, but, Father, we can listen to your truth and that we can learn and that we can be transformed by it.

Thank you for allowing us that privilege. In Christ's name, amen. Amen. All right.