

SBCOD Bible Study Notes

**10-8-25
John 15**

The Vine and the Branches – Verses 1-3

¹ “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

15:1 The grapevine is a prolific plant; a single vine supports numerous branches and bears many grapes. In the Old Testament, grapes symbolized Israel’s fruitfulness in doing God’s work on the earth (Psalm 80:8; Isaiah 5:1-7; Ezekiel 19:10-14). In the Passover meal, the fruit of the vine symbolized God’s goodness to his people.

15:1 Christ is the vine, and God is the gardener who cares for the branches to make them fruitful. The branches are all those who claim to be followers of Christ. The fruitful branches are true believers who by their living union with Christ produce much fruit. But those who become unproductive— those who turn back from following Christ after making a superficial commitment— will be separated from the vine. Unproductive followers are as good as dead and will be cut off and tossed aside.

15:2-3 Jesus makes a distinction between two kinds of pruning: (1) cutting off and (2) cutting back branches. Fruitful branches are cut back to promote growth. In other words, God must sometimes discipline us to strengthen our character and faith. But branches that don’t bear fruit are cut off at the trunk not only because they are worthless but also because they often infect the rest of the tree. People who don’t bear fruit for God or who try to block the efforts of God’s followers will be cut off from his life-giving power.

The Vital Relationship Between The Branch And The Vine – Verses 4-5

⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

15:5 “Fruit” is not limited to soul winning. In this chapter, answered prayer, joy, and love are mentioned as fruit (15:7, 11, 12). Galatians 5:22-24 and 2 Peter 1:5-8 describe additional fruit: qualities of Christian character.

15:4-5 The purpose of the branch is to bear fruit. Though there are uses for grape leaves, people don’t raise grape vines to look at the pretty leaves. They take the trouble to cultivate, plant, water and tend the vines so that fruit can be enjoyed. In this sense, we can say that fruit represents Christian character (such as the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. God’s work in us and our connection to Him should be evident by fruit, and perhaps by much fruit. Jesus used this picture to assure His disciples of continued connection and relationship even though He was about to depart from them. Yet He spoke this in a way that also indicated an aspect of choice on their part. Abiding was something they must choose.

The Price Of Not Abiding And The Promise To Those Who Do Abide – Verses 6-8

⁶If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

15:6 Remaining in Christ means (1) believing that he is God's Son (1 John 4: 15), (2) receiving him as Savior and Lord (John 1:12), (3) doing what God says (1 John 3: 24), (4) continuing to believe the gospel (1 John 2: 24), and (5) relating in love to the community of believers, Christ's body (John 15:12).

15:6-8 Many people try to be good, honest people who do what is right. But Jesus says that the only way to live a truly good life is to stay close to him, like a branch attached to the vine. Apart from Christ our efforts are unfruitful. Are you receiving the nourishment and life offered by Christ, the vine? If not, you are missing a special gift he has for you.

15:8 When a vine bears "much fruit," God is glorified, for daily he sent the sunshine and rain to make the crops grow, and constantly he nurtured each tiny plant and prepared it to blossom. What a moment of glory for the Lord of the harvest when the harvest is brought into the barns, mature and ready for use! He made it all happen! This farming analogy shows how God is glorified when people come into a right relationship with him and begin to "bear much fruit" in their lives.

The Link Between Love And Obedience – Verses 9-11

⁹"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

15:9-11 When things are going well, we feel elated. When hardships come, we sink into depression. But true joy transcends the rolling waves of circumstance. Joy comes from a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ. When our lives are intertwined with his, he will help us walk through adversity without sinking into debilitating lows and manage prosperity without moving into deceptive highs. The joy of living with Jesus Christ daily will keep us levelheaded, no matter how high or low our circumstances.

Jesus Speaks Of The Extent Of His Love That They Are To Imitate – Verses 12-15

¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

15:12-13 We are to love each other as Jesus loved us, and he loved us enough to give his life for us. We may not have to die for someone, but there are other ways to practice sacrificial love: listening, helping, encouraging, giving. Think of someone in particular who needs this kind of love today. Give all the love you can, and then try to give a little more.

15:15 Because Jesus Christ is Lord and Master, he should call us servants; instead, he calls us friends. How comforting and reassuring to be chosen as Christ's friends! Because he is Lord and Master, we owe him our unqualified obedience, but most of all, Jesus asks us to obey him because we love him.

Chosen To Bear Fruit And To Love One Another – Verses 16-17

¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

15:16 Jesus made the first choice— to love and to die for us, to invite us to live with him forever. We make the next choice— to accept or reject his offer. Without his choice, we would have no choice to make.

15:17 Christians will get plenty of hatred from the world; from each other we need love and support. Do you allow small problems to get in the way of loving other believers? Jesus commands that you love them, and he will give you the strength to do it.

The World Hates The Disciples – Verses 18-20

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

15:18-20 If the world hates you: Jesus told the disciples that the world would often hate them. As wonderful as Jesus was and His message was, they should expect to be rejected when Jesus departed, just as much as they were often opposed while Jesus was with them. The disciples Jesus spoke to that night would know the hatred of the world. They were persecuted and all of them died as martyrs in Jesus’ name, except for John -- whom they tried to kill, but he miraculously would not die at their hands.

The World May Reject Disciples Because Of Who Jesus Is – Verses 21-25

²¹ They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason.’

15:21-25 Because they do not know Him who sent Me: If people do not know God as He really is, they often attack and persecute those who represent God in some way. This should cause sympathy in the persecuted for their persecutors. Now they have no excuse for their sin: Because Jesus did come to and speak to the world, they knew something of God that they did not know before. This made them without excuse for hating and rejecting Jesus and His Father in heaven. Jesus did among them the works which no one else did, and they still hated and rejected Him.

The Work of the Holy Spirit – Verses 26-27

²⁶ “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

15:26 Once again Jesus offers hope. The Holy Spirit gives strength to endure the unreasonable hatred and evil in our world and the hostility many have toward Christ. This is especially comforting for those facing persecution.

15:27 Jesus uses two names for the Holy Spirit—“Advocate” and “Spirit of truth.” The word Advocate conveys the helping, encouraging, and strengthening work of the Spirit. Spirit of truth points to the teaching, illuminating, and reminding work of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit ministers to both the head and the heart, and both dimensions are important.