

## The Vines Fruitful Branches, Part 2

*By: Lincoln Forlong*

### John 15:1-17

**Since we now have been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!  
(Rom. 5:9-10)**

Before we came to Christ we were under the wrath of God as enemies of God. Here in **John 15:1-17**, we see the opposite picture of our new life in Christ. We, as branches now depend on Christ (the vine), and we feed off the nutrition and the sap provided to us through Him. He has become our very life source. He feeds and sustains us. Through Him, we can grow and produce an abundance of fruit. Not only that, but through the fruit of our lives, we now have the means to reproduce even more plants for Christ. And thus, the chain reaction begins.

Here in **John 15**, we find some of Jesus' final instructions before His imminent crucifixion. These are fundamentally crucial truths for living a successful spiritual life. This is by no means a fairy tale, as sweet as it reads. This passage is an affirmation of the security of our relationship with Jesus Christ. It expresses the intimacy we have in Him.

We must see this from God's perspective. Unlike us, He's not embroiled in all the petty or not so petty issues of our day to day lives. This passage is the vine's provision for the Body of Christ. There are many branches on the vine just as we are many branches in the Body of Christ, growing out of the vine.

When a branch on a vine gets sick and the Gardener does not attend to it, then the sickness of that branch spreads to the other branches. We must ensure we lead obedient lives dependent on the sap of the vine. If we lead disobedient lives we will infect the other branches, to their detriment.

Look through the Jn. 15:1-17 passage. Notice the truths that God says about us in the text. **You are the:**

- Branches of Jesus Christ
- Disciples of Jesus Christ
- Friends of Jesus Christ
- Chosen Ones of Jesus Christ
- Cleansed Ones by Jesus Christ
- Loved Ones of Jesus Christ
- Pruned Ones of Jesus Christ
- Fruitful Ones of Jesus Christ
- Obedient Ones of Jesus Christ
- Answered Ones by Jesus Christ
- Glorifiers of God
- Joyful Ones in Jesus Christ

**That is how God sees you and I in Christ!**

**Jn. 15:7 'If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.'**

In older Bibles, we would find the word 'abide', in place of 'remain'. In the Greek, this word expresses living in the full potential of all that the relationship has to offer. It's much more than just remaining in a particular situation.

**"If my Word remains in you..."**

If you are struggling with life and losing your grip on your Christian walk, you MUST **saturate** yourself with the Scriptures. Sin will do everything in your life to get you out of the Word of God, especially when the pressure comes on and difficulties arise. We must REMAIN in the Word of God.

'Ask and it will be given'. However, the prerequisite is to REMAIN in the Word of God. Our prayer requests should be in line with the Scriptures, and therefore God's will. God's Word will change your desires, attitudes, reactions to difficult people and difficult circumstances, and even your entire perspective of various situations which crop up in your life. It will align your thinking with God's thinking. The mind-transforming wisdom found in the Scriptures will cause a dramatic change in our prayer lives!

**Jn. 15:8-9 'This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.'**

It is to the Father's glory that we bear *much* fruit which authenticates us as His disciples. To make us effective, God prunes not only the sick branches, but He prunes the healthy ones as well, so we'll become even *more* productive.

Just as in any sport, no matter how naturally adept you are at it, the training intensifies as you progress in the activity, thus concentrating the discipline on specific aspects required to improve your game ten-fold. The training is designed to develop your performance to a standard of excellence. Those of us who are involved in sport can acknowledge that it hurts sometimes doesn't it? It's exhausting, tiring, relentless, and even pain-inflicting. But relentless tenacity on our part reaps the rewards. The more we practice doing the right thing, the better we get at it until it becomes second nature. Even under pressure.

When you prune a vine, the branches you prune put more of its resources into extracting the sap from the vine. It essentially says "*I've lost the baggage, now give me more!*" It certainly doesn't give up and die. Our pruning is achieved through painful circumstances. Therefore we should not allow ourselves to be content with our own apathy and stagnation. We will never grow and improve with this attitude.

Just as a Gardener scrapes and washes lichen and other hindrances off the branches, so the Saviour washes and scrubs us clean. Why does a parent bathe their child to wash off the dirt time and again? Because no sooner are they out of the bath, they quickly become tainted again. The Spirit of God sees when we've been walking in some swamp-land and He sees we need to be cleansed through the Word of God. Show yourselves to be His disciples. Are we remaining in the Word of God?

**Jn. 15:10 'If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love.'**

It is our responsibility to remain in His love. The vine has the expectation that we will live out and express His love by obeying His Word. We have no right to say to the vine – “*You’re not performing as I expected Lord, this isn’t fair!*” No. We should embrace pruning. Pruning ultimately brings joy. It only intensifies the pain if we reject the pruning.

God gives us the strength and resources we need to obey. Surrender to God. CHOOSE to obey. How else will we know that the love of Jesus Christ lives in us unless we obey? It certainly isn’t always easy to obey, but if we do, we will experience complete assurance of salvation. Do not allow yourself to become distracted by your own fleshly desires. Be aware also that Satan is masterful at getting people to come into your life to try to influence you to compromise.

**Jn. 15:11 ‘I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.’**

Whose joy comes first? It’s the joy of our Saviour. The result of our obedience is that the Saviour gets the joy. Just as a parent feels joy over their child’s obedience. Our Saviour has the right, and the expectation by the Gardener’s design to experience joy. This is the way our joy becomes complete! We can experience full saturation of joy in our lives regardless of circumstances.

**Jn. 15:12-13 ‘My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one but this, that one lay down his life for his friends.’**

When we are disobeying our Lord we are lousy at expressing love to one another. We should not be asking how *they* can be showing love to us. Rather, we should be asking ourselves how we can show love to *them*. We can show love to one another in the same way that Jesus showed love to us. Not only with what feels comfortable to us, but by being willing to make the ultimate sacrifice - our very lives.

**Jn. 15:14 ‘You are my friends if you do what I command.’**

To obey Jesus’ commands is to truly make Him Lord. Or, to truly make Him lord, we must obey His commands. We need to live in a constant state of surrender and obedience. This is the ultimate expression of our gratefulness and love for Him. Is it not natural for the branches to be grateful for the life giving sap of the vine? The vine sustains their very lives! Therefore we must show our utter dependence on Him who sustains us daily.

**Jn. 15:15 ‘I 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.’**

Jesus Christ does not keep secrets from us. It’s all in the Word of God. He has laid it all out and made everything crystal clear. Submerge yourself in the Word of God. Just as the age old Hymn sings ‘What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grief’s to bear...’ He shares His wisdom with us, He shares in our sufferings and carries our burdens. He is the ultimate friend.

**Jn. 15:16 ‘You did not choose me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.’**

Here we see a strong manifestation of the Sovereignty of God. He *chose* you. He hunted you down and pursued you. Praise God! Without Him we would still be pursuing earthly pleasures. So why did He choose us? To bear fruit that will LAST. Not just to produce one small crop. Not at all. He grew us with the intention that we would go on bearing fruit that would last, season upon season! Not only that, he grew us with the intention that we would reproduce other fruit-bearing plants who also walk in obedient fellowship with Jesus Christ. Therefore we should be asking for fruit in our lives because Jesus Christ also asks for fruit in our lives. It is not acceptable to be fruitless.

**Jn. 15:17 'This is my command: Love each other.'**

How do we love each other? Exhort one another to be fruit bearers and exhibit our own fruit to each other. It is not loving to look at your Christians friends and be satisfied with their stunted growth and lack of fruit. If we put into practice all that Christ has shared, only then can we experience true joy.