

1. **Introduction:** In the metaphor of the “True Vine,” Jesus has said He is the True Vine of God. Believers are branches in the Vine. He has talked about the implications of abiding in Him. Now in 15:6 He talks of what happens if a branch fails to abide in Him. In 15:7 He makes an astounding promise to those who do abide in Him.
2. **John 15:6:** *“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.”*
 - ◆ We know from 1 John 3:24 that abiding in Jesus means obeying His commandments.
 - ◆ Branches that abide in the vine are cared for by the Vinedresser, but be warned, branches that fail to abide in the vine wither and are gathered and cast into the fire.
 - ◆ This verse represents a potential problem for all who believe salvation, once given by God’s grace, cannot be taken away.
 - ◆ What then are we to make of the verse? Is it possible Jesus means a believer can lose their salvation and end up in hell? From other Scripture we know the answer is no.
 - ◆ It could be that Jesus is referring to people who are believers in name only. That was the view of Matthew Henry, Charles Spurgeon, and most Puritans.
 - ◆ The fact that Judas ceased to abide in Jesus as he demonstrated on the night of the Passover Supper when he left to betray Jesus to Jewish authorities.
 - ◆ Judas left to betray Jesus shortly before Jesus gave the True Vine metaphor to the remaining 11 disciples. That means a branch that failed to abide in the Vine was fresh in Jesus’ mind as He presented the metaphor.
 - ◆ Another interpretation is that the verse refers to a true believer who is justified in Christ but who is not abiding in Christ. In 1 Corinthians Paul speaks of such a person being saved as through fire in which the person’s works are burned up.
 - ◆ 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 *“Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw-¹³ each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.”*
 - ◆ Arthur W. Pink points out an OT example. Lot failed to abide. He was out of fellowship with the Lord, ceased to bear fruit to God’s glory. Consequently, his dead works were all burned up in Sodom; yet he himself was saved!
 - ◆ I don’t know which interpretation is correct, but I am confident that any interpretation is wrong if it requires a believer to be lost from of God’s hand.
 - ◆ Some words have a set of simultaneous meanings that must be maintained as a whole.
 - ◆ Abide is such a word having a rich spectrum of simultaneous meanings. Love is another.

3. **Christian Love as an Example of Simultaneous Meanings:** 1 Corinthians 13 provides an illustration of what is meant by a word having a spectrum of simultaneous meanings.
- ◆ Paul writes about the vital importance of love as a guiding principle for Christian life.
 - ◆ He compares love, a fruit of the spirit, to spiritual gifts. Believers have different spiritual gifts, but every believer is to develop all the spiritual fruits of which love is the greatest.
 - ◆ Paul says if I speak the languages of men and angels, have prophetic powers understand all mysteries, have all knowledge, and have faith capable of removing mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.
 - ◆ He then compares what can be gained by dramatic sacrifices to the gain acquired in a life guided by love. Giving away everything possessed and even delivering up your body to be burned brings no gain without love.
 - ◆ Having established the unique importance of love, Paul says the love he speaks of is *patient and kind, does not envy or boast, is not arrogant or rude, does not insist on its own way, is not irritable or resentful, does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.*
 - ◆ Notice that all these attributes are related to attitudes in dealing with other people.
 - ◆ It is as though Paul says, “You have been enabled to control your attitudes. Do so!”
 - ◆ Paul’s list of attributes are always to be true of Christian love. Does Christian love include other attributes? Yes! Christian love spans more than Paul lists, but not less.
 - ◆ Christian love exhibits compassion, helps the perplexed gain understanding, helps care for the sick and hurting, prays, visits, is generous with physical and spiritual help, etc.
 - ◆ Christian love is virtually unlimited in scope, reaching out to help or just standing beside and comforting in all kinds of situations that beset people in their earthly lives.
 - ◆ Above all, Christian love is an attitude of willingness to bear and share one another’s burdens. That love is completed by actually bearing one another’s burdens.
 - ◆ A Christian must simultaneously have in their heart a wide variety of the elements of love as well as the capability and capacity to invent new ways of being lovingly helpful.
 - ◆ They must also have the judgment necessary to discern the right element of love to help in the situation at hand as well as the willingness to do so.
 - ◆ The attributes of love listed by Paul are focused on love for people. What about love for Christ? Jesus Himself tells us. Obedience is the key. You demonstrate your love for Jesus by obeying His commandments (John 14:15, 21, 23, 24).
 - ◆ Does Jesus mean that “obedience” to Him is identical to “love” for Him? No! Love for Jesus is more than obedience but not less.
 - ◆ Love for Jesus is verified by an intense desire to obey Him.
 - ◆ Obedience to Christ is what mathematicians call a necessary condition. Obedience must be present for love to be present. Genuine love for Christ includes obedience.
 - ◆ Obedience is “necessary” to love Christ but “sufficient love” includes other factors.

- ◆ Other factors of our love for Christ include adoration, fellowship through prayer, desire to bring Him glory, gratitude for all He has done and is doing, etc.
4. **Simultaneous Meanings of Abide:** “Abide” has a simultaneous spectrum of meanings.
- ◆ The dictionary meaning of “abide” is to remain loyal, to remain in place, to rest satisfied with, to continue or endure, or to conform to or comply with.
 - ◆ As we have seen, John speaks of Jesus in 1 John 3:24 saying, *“Whoever keeps his commandments abides in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.”*
 - ◆ The verse provides two important bits of information. A necessary condition for abiding in Christ. Secondly, how a believer knows Christ abides in Him.
 - ◆ As was the case with love, the meanings (or implications of the meanings) of abide are best thought of not individually, but as a simultaneous spectrum of meaning.
 - ◆ The dictionary meanings are important. To abide “in Christ” you should remain loyal, should rest satisfied in Him, should love and honor Him, etc.
 - ◆ Each of these implications of abide is a desirable part of our attitude toward Christ, but not all are essential to abide in Christ. In other words you can abide in Him without making manifest in your life all the implications of the meaning of “abide.”
 - ◆ But one thing is absolutely necessary. To abide in Christ, you must desire to and strive to obey His commands. Obedience is a necessary condition for abiding in Christ.
 - ◆ Consider some implications of this truth. From Scripture we know that the progressive transformation of our initially fallen inner being into conformity with Christ is a necessary condition for obedience. That transformation begins with regeneration.
 - ◆ The un-regenerated cannot obey Christ, cannot act right with the right motive.
 - ◆ Abiding in Christ is more than obedience, but it can never be less. The indwelling Holy Spirit is both instrumental in our ability to abide in Christ and is the instrument by which we know Christ abides in us.
 - ◆ Since obedience is a “necessary” ingredient for abiding, and abiding is a “necessary” condition for bearing fruit, obedience is also necessary for fruitfulness.
 - ◆ No obedience, then no abiding and no fruit. Moreover, the obedience must be from the heart and not merely “mechanical.”
 - ◆ Next an astounding promise.
5. **John 15:7:** *“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”* The only constraint is that what is asked be within God’s will.
- ◆ Ask for *“whatever you wish”* within the bounds of God’s will and it will be done.
 - ◆ This amazing promise is conditioned on abiding in Jesus and His words abiding in us.
 - ◆ To receive the benefits of the promise, you must believe Jesus’ words, act in accordance with them (obey), and align your life with His will.

- ◆ Thus will you abide in Christ and have His promise that your prayers will be answered.
- ◆ You may ask what you wish within God's will and it will be done for you.

6. **John 15:8:** *“By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”*

- ◆ Fruit-bearing is for the benefit of the Father and is to His glory. Everything the incarnate Jesus did and everything He enables believers to do was and is to the glory of the Father.
- ◆ In Jesus prayer, in John 17:4, He says in His earthly work He has glorified the Father by completing the work the Father gave Him to do.
- ◆ Believers also bring glory to the Father by completing the work the Father gives them to do. The first work is to believe in Jesus and the Father who sent Him. That is followed by the work of abiding “in Christ” and producing much “good fruit.”
- ◆ I believe the reason the Father is glorified by believers producing much good fruit is that the spiritual fruits in the lives of believers are reflections of God's own being.
- ◆ In their life, believers display creaturely versions of God's communicable attributes, and by doing so, bring glory to God. Bountiful fruit reflects the unending abundance of God's spiritual grace.
- ◆ When a believer produces and continues to produce abundant fruit “in Christ,” they demonstrate in increasing measure their being transformed into a likeness of Christ.
- ◆ Believers abide in Christ by obedience to His commands. If we disobey and fail to abide in Christ we may escape damnation, but it will be as through fire and all works done apart from Christ will be burned up (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).
- ◆ Obedience is necessary to love Christ and to abide in Him. Abiding in Him enables production of the internal “Fruit of the Spirit.”
- ◆ *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control”* (Galatians 5:22-23).
- ◆ The fruit of outward external actions like evangelism and other good works are very important, but they don't come first. They flow from a transformed character built on the fruit of the spirit.
- ◆ Boice says striving to produce the fruit of conversions when initially converted is like demanding an apple tree produce other apple trees. It doesn't work that way.
- ◆ First, an apple tree produces apples, which contain seeds. Then, with God's provision, new apple trees are produced from the seeds.
- ◆ So it should be with us. Develop the internal fruit of the spirit and the external good works will follow. Obedience is the key to abiding, which is the key to fruitfulness which is a key to evangelism.

7. **What is Next:** John 15:9-17.