

# The Vine and Its Branches

John 15:1-8

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

In John 15:1-8 Jesus taught as He did many times by using an analogy from things in the natural world. To teach His disciples about spiritual fruitfulness on this occasion, He compared Himself to a vine, and men to branches.

Jesus spoke of two different categories of men in this passage: those who abide or remain in Him, and those who do not. Those who abide in Christ are believers, and it is only because we “abide in the Vine” that we are “branches” that can, and will indeed, bear fruit to the glory of God.

Jesus summarized His teaching in this passage in verse eight when He said: ***“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”*** (John 15:8). The bearing of fruit to the glory of God is how we give evidence that our faith is genuine; it is how we show ourselves to be in truth, Jesus’ disciples. And it is important for us to understand that God Himself will work in our lives to bring about this bearing of fruit to His glory, according to the principle that Jesus taught us in John 12:24-26.

A few verses later in John 15, Jesus said: “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” (John 15:10). Here in John 15:10, and also in John 14:21-24, Jesus taught that men will demonstrate a genuine faith in Him by the fact that they walk in obedience to His commands.

The Apostle John also gave us this same teaching in I John 2:3-6 and I John 5:3-5. Believers will at times sin after they are saved, but the life of every believer will be characterized fundamentally by obedience and submission to God's word, in contrast to those of the world whose lives will be characterized fundamentally by sin and self-seeking. Through our obedience to God's commands, especially when we find ourselves suffering in a hard place in life, we bear fruit to His glory, showing ourselves to be His disciples. (Consider also Matthew 26:38-39 and Philippians 2:8.)

God did not leave us with only the teachings of His Son Jesus Christ, but He also assigned others to expound upon those teachings and to provide additional light on all that He intends to reveal to us as His people. This is the reason that we have the full canon of the Scriptures as it is given to us in the books of the Holy Bible. Therefore, when we are endeavoring to interpret any teaching that Jesus gave to us, we should interpret it not only in the light of the teaching itself, but also in the light of other teachings that He gave to us, and in the light of all the Scriptures as a whole.

As believers, as those who abide in the Vine, we are those whom Jesus characterized as "good ground" in the Parable of the Sower, who receive the "seed" of the word of God and bear fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some one hundred times what was sown (Matthew 13:1-23). We are those "good trees" that Jesus spoke about in Matthew 7:15-23, and we can be recognized by the good fruit that we bear, in contrast to others who bear bad fruit. We are the wheat in Jesus' Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43). The wheat bears good fruit, whereas the weeds cannot and will in the end be burned. And again, as those who abide in the Vine, we are those whom the writer of Hebrews mentioned, who drink in the "rain" of the word of God and produce a good and useful crop. By contrast, others will drink in this same "rain" of the word of God but will bear only thorns and briars (Hebrews 6:4-9).

Those of us who are genuine believers abide in the Vine, by God's grace and by His power, ***and we will all bear fruit to the glory of God, by which we prove that we are in fact Jesus' disciples.*** In contrast to genuine believers, unbelievers do not abide in Christ, and therefore they are unable to bear fruit. In order for anyone to bear fruit to the glory of God, they must "abide in the Vine", which is to say that they must be in union with Christ. In other words, they must be a believer. This is the message of Jesus' teaching in John 15:1-8, and this teaching agrees with other teachings in the Bible as well, several of which we have considered above.

As we study John 15:1-8, we should understand that our position as those who abide in the Vine has ***nothing*** to do with ***any*** works of our own. As Paul taught us: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; ***and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.***” (Ephesians 2:8-9, emphasis added). If we obtained our salvation through any works of our own, even some perceived “right decision” that we made, then we would be able to boast that we were humble enough, or wise enough, etc., etc. to make the “right decision” to believe, when others did not.

And at the same time, we should understand that we do not maintain our own salvation through any works of our own, for then we would be able to boast that our works were good enough to keep us saved. The Scriptures teach that our salvation is not a result of any works of our own, rather it is the gift of God given to us as His elect, as those whom He chose before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him. (Ephesians 1:4-5).

As genuine believers, we will bear fruit to the glory of God as a result of the fact that we “abide” in the Vine, in union with Christ. ***This fruit will be produced because by God’s grace we have been called to faith in Christ*** (John 6:44, 65, Ephesians 2:8-9, I Peter 1:1-2, others). ***And it is by God’s power, not by our own power, that we abide or remain in Christ*** (John 6:37-39, John 10:27-30, Matthew 18:10-14, Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:6, I Thessalonians 5:23-24, I Peter 1:3-5, others).