



No Fruit, No Life

John 15:1-11



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Main point: Fruit bearing is proof of discipleship.

Introduction:

Did you know there's a grape vine at the Hampton Court Palace in East Molesey, England that is 250 years old and still produces an average of 600 pounds of fruit every year? This remarkable plant has been dubbed the Great Vine. It is said to have been planted at the castle in 1768 by a man named Lancelot "Capability" Brown who was the chief gardener for King George III. It is arguably the oldest vine in the world and has been measured to prove that it is certainly the largest—it is 13 feet around at the base and its longest rod measures 120 feet. Its roots are planted outside, while its vines are encased in an aluminum frame glass house to protect them from harsh weather. Over the centuries, there have been about five or six different glass houses built around the Vine since the plant keeps growing. There is a bare patch of ground outside the glass house with a sign that reads:

THE GREAT VINE

The roots of the Vine extend
beneath this area.

It is kept unplanted in order to
prevent other plants from
competing for moisture and
nutrients.

This ancient plant is one of the premiere attractions at the castle and it is treated as such. Speaking of treatment, this incredible plant still produces fruit today as a result of careful tending and pruning each year. Over the centuries, this Vine has been attended by only *ten* vinedressers, with the latest one being Gill Strudwick who is entering her 36th year of caring for the Vine. Ms. Strudwick lives on site at the castle grounds, as the care of this plant is a full-time job, requiring work early in the morning, throughout the day, and sometimes well into the night all year round.

As an example of her typical duties, in February when the buds begin to break, a fertilizer is applied to the soil inside the glasshouse and the vine border outside. Once the new shoots are around 2.5-5 centimeters long, it is time for disbudding to reduce the number of new shoots. The remaining shoots grow until they are about 12-18 inches long. Then their growing point is pinched out and they are tied to the trellis with raffia. Immediately after flowering, the number of bunches are reduced, and the remaining bunches are thinned. During the growing season the Vine is given liquid and foliar feeds. Later in the summer some leaf thinning is carried out to allow sunlight to fall upon the ripening fruit. The grapes are harvested for sale in the palace shops in late August to early September. In November and December when the plant is fully dormant, the fruiting spurs are pruned back to one or two buds.

Certainly, this impressive plant exemplifies the truth we see in our passage today. We know that the Great Vine is alive because it bears fruit. If you are here today and you are saved, you are being compared to a branch connected to the trunk who is Christ, while God the Father is the vinedresser. And just like any other vinedresser who plants a vine, He *expects* a harvest. In other words, God is looking for *fruit*. Fruit is *very* important. Just like last week's message stated that *your root determines your fruit*, this week's message has a similar summary statement: *no fruit, no life*. Spiritual fruit, or the absence thereof, reveals whether or not we possess spiritual life. The main idea in this passage is found in verse eight that bearing fruit proves discipleship; this passage is about true salvation and discipleship. It's about the marks of a true Christian. So, let's turn to the text and examine ourselves to see whether we are bearing any fruit for Christ and how we can become more fruitful for His sake.

Outline:

- A. The Divine Vine and Vinedresser (vv.1-3)
- B. Abiding in the Vine Is the Way to Bear Fruit (vv.4-8)
- C. Love Is the Way to Abiding (vv.9-17)

Exposition:

A. The Divine Vine and Vinedresser (v.1-3)

A good habit to always do when studying any passage in the Bible is to set the verses in their context. The Gospel of John was written by the Apostle John who was the brother of James. Together they were "*the sons of Zebedee*" (Matt.10:2-4); Jesus later called them the "*Sons of Thunder*" (Mark 3:17). Most historians believe John wrote his gospel around A.D. 80-90 while he was in Ephesus, about 50 years after he witnessed Jesus' earthly ministry. The Apostle also wrote the epistles of 1-3 John and the Book of Revelation and was one of the Jesus' closest disciples, being part of the "inner circle" of Peter, James, and

John. His gospel is the only one of the four that contains a precise purpose statement. He declares, *"but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name"* (John 20:31).

The immediate context of our passage is commonly called Jesus' Upper Room Discourse where He pulled His disciples up close and began teaching them about service to one another (John 13:1-20), His betrayal (John 13:21-30), His departure and loving one another (John 13:33-34), His being the way to the Father (John 14:6), and the promise of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-26). This section of scripture is also sometimes called the Farewell Discourse because these chapters represent the final teachings of Jesus to His disciples before going to the cross; they are the last words of Christ to His men where He is seeking to paint them a very real picture about the upcoming events of Calvary and to reassure them that this was all part of the Father's plan of redemption, which they would have to carry on after His departure. However, not all of the Upper Room Discourse happened in the Upper Room. Take a look at the last verse of chapter 14.

- **John 14:31**—but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here.

After sharing a meal with His men and beginning to teach them, He commands them to get up and leave from that place. He and His disciples left the Upper Room and made their way toward the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:1) where Jesus would later be arrested and captured. Along their way, it is likely that they may have passed a vineyard where rows of grapes were probably glistening in the moonlight. It is possible that Jesus stopped, pointed to the vineyard, and as He was often prone to do, drew an illustration from nature to reinforce a spiritual point that He wanted to teach His disciples. In this case, He used a simple viticultural illustration of a vine, its branches, and how fruit is produced.

Jesus begins His illustration by introducing two of the three major characters in this passage: Himself as the vine and His Father as the vinedresser. Jesus starts by saying, *"I am the true vine..."* (v.1). Unfortunately, due to the length of our passage and everything that is here, we won't have time to unpack everything, but right away we need to mention that this is the last of seven "I AM" statements made by Jesus. Jesus said, *"I am the bread of life"* (John 6:35-48); *I am the Light of the world* (John 8:12); *I am the door of the sheep* (John 10:7); *I am the good shepherd* (John 10:11); *I am the resurrection and the life* (John 11:25); *I am the way, and the truth, and the life* (John 14:6); and *I am the true vine* (in our passage)." All of these statements point to some aspect of Jesus' deity and hearken back to the account of Moses at the burning bush where God told him that His name is I AM (Ex.3:14). Jesus used these statements to affirm His deity and let His listeners know that He is the same God who commanded Moses to remove the sandals from his feet (Ex.3:5), now come in human flesh.

This is a tenet of the Christian faith that cannot be denied. If you deny the deity of Christ, you are not a Christian. It is a non-negotiable truth of Christian doctrine that, if denied, has eternal consequences. Jesus clearly summarized this for us when He said, *"...unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."* (John 8:24) Since our sins cause a separation between us and God (Is.59:2), dying in your sins means that you are dying separated from God—at enmity with Him. To die in this state, is to go to hell. Denying the deity of Christ leads to eternal damnation.

In this final I AM statement, Jesus says that He is the *true vine*. He is the source of life for all who are in Him. Notice that He uses a qualifier. He is not just any vine, but He is the *true* vine, meaning that He is

the authentic and real one. There may be other sources where we seek life and nutrients, but all of them will fail because they are not the true vine.

Another reason that Jesus made this distinction is because scripture also compares *Israel* to a vine.

- **Psalm 80:8-12**—You removed a vine from Egypt; You drove out the nations and planted it. ⁹ You cleared the ground before it, and it took deep root and filled the land. ¹⁰ The mountains were covered with its shadow, and the cedars of God with its boughs. ¹¹ It was sending out its branches to the sea and its shoots to the River. ¹² Why have You broken down its hedges, so that all who pass that way pick its fruit?
- **Isaiah 5:1-7**—Let me sing now for my well-beloved a song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. ² He dug it all around, removed its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it and also hewed out a wine vat in it; then He expected it to produce good grapes, but it produced only worthless ones. ³ “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between Me and My vineyard. ⁴ What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones? ⁵ So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. ⁶ I will lay it waste; it will not be pruned or hoed, but briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it.” ⁷ For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel and the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress.

The nation of Israel was rescued from Egyptian bondage and was planted in a land where they were expected to flourish and produce a crop of righteousness unto the Lord. And they did flourish; as these verses say they took deep root in the land and the mountains were covered with their shadow. However, they grew wildly and out of control and only produced worthless fruit. Do you know what’s worse than having no crops at all? The answer is having a *worthless* crop. When there is no crop, there is no hope that one is coming; the farmer’s expectations are kept low. However, a worthless crop—one where fruit begins to grow, but then falters—is worse because your hopes and expectations are built up only to be let down. God had expectations for the nation of Israel, but because of the nation’s sin, they did not materialize. So, God judged them by allowing them to be laid waste. They were a vineyard that God planted, but they were worthless; they were not the *true* vine.

However, from the nation of Israel, from the lineage and house of David, a tender shoot would spring up out of parched ground (*Is.53:2*). Christ would come forth in the midst of this barren and desolate vineyard and unlike the worthless vineyard where God looked for a yield of justice and righteousness, Jesus would grow up before Him and would fulfill all righteousness (*Matt.3:15*). Jesus is the true vine that brings forth a crop which satisfies our Father the vinedresser. He is the true vine through whom the life of God flows to the branches.

And now we’re introduced to the third character in this passage: the branches. Right away you should notice that there are two types of branches just like last week there were two gates, two ways, and two destinies for each. This passage speaks of two types of branches and what happens to each. There are branches that are fruitless which are removed and burned and there are those that are fruitful which are pruned so that they bear more fruit. Jesus states it plainly in verse five that *we are the branches*. The question that this passage forces us to consider is this: What type of branch are you? Are you bearing any spiritual fruit? If you claim to be a Christian, there should be some evidence. There should be some spiritual fruit coming from your life. You say you’re a Christian, your fruit proves it.

And who determines which branches are pruned and which are removed? God. God, the heavenly vinedresser, is the judge who decides which branches to keep and which to remove. Now I've read this week that the phrase *"takes away"* in verse two refers to God lifting up the unfruitful branches so that they can *begin* to bear fruit. And certainly, that is part of the work of a vinedresser, but the greater context of Judas betraying Christ in Chapter 13 and the immediate context of verse six in our passage don't support that interpretation. When God *"takes away"* a branch, He is removing it. He removes branches—these are false, *nominal* Christians that are not bearing fruit—and they are dried and burned (v.6); they wither without true life and their destiny is the eternal furnace of hell.

As for the other branches, those *true* Christians who show signs of life by bearing spiritual fruit, the outcome is different. These branches receive something different from the Father: *pruning*. To the non-gardener, pruning seems counter-intuitive. You have a plant that appears healthy and begins putting forth many buds so you might think it should just be left alone. However, for the strength of the plant and for the betterment of the yield, pruning is *necessary*.

Illustration: We lived next to some neighbors at my old house who had a big, beautiful tree that gave shading to the whole yard. Huge tree. And at the end of summer, probably going into the fall, they had some people come out and cut it back. They took off everything. They call that type of pruning, "topping." There were just sticks on top. And I looked at that and thought, "what have you done?!" And sure enough, that following year it came back beautifully. Pruning is necessary.

As fruitful branches, God prunes and cuts away things from our lives that hinder our growth. And just like it sounds, this activity of God is often *painful* for us. Having things sheared from us that we believe are essential can be excruciating. He often does this pruning through trials and hardships. He removes things like pet sins, idols, and competing loves so that we will come to depend on the vine who is Christ.

Pastor Brian Bill of Edgewood Baptist Church says this about pruning:

- *God does not prune us indiscriminately. He knows what He's doing because He always follows a precise plan. Since He's working to make us more like Christ, He only removes what is necessary and avoids unnecessary injury.*
- *Pruning involves pain. The Father's pruning knife is sharp, but it is not designed to ultimately damage or destroy us. He uses all sorts of unpleasant things to prune us—circumstances, failures, ruptured relationships, illnesses, and trials—in order to get us to bear more fruit.*
- *Pruning can last a long time. The pruning process doesn't continue for one day, or for one week, or one year. We really can't say, "Well, I've been through that, and I'm glad there's no more pain coming my way." In fact, the longer a grapevine is alive, the more pruning it needs. Some of us who are older in our faith may need more pruning than we think we do.*

We have yet another reason to rejoice in the midst of suffering; God may be pruning! Don't despise your trials, they could be the shears of your heavenly Vinedresser at work.

Now before we move on to our next point, we have a word in verse three about the knife God uses to do His pruning work. At first glance, this verse seems out of place and doesn't make much sense. However, it would be helpful for you to make this interpretive note in your Bibles, the word used for "prunes" in verse two (*kathairō: kath-ah'ee-ro*) is derived from the word used for "clean" (*katharos: kath-ar-os*) in verse three. Jesus is telling His disciples (minus Judas Iscariot) that they were already *pruned*

because of the word He had spoken to them. They already had true faith, for “*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ*” (Rom.10:17). They were given faith to believe in the person of Christ, they would eventually come to understand the work of Christ, and by that Word of Christ—which is the substance of the Gospel—they were saved. They were already pruned and ready for fruit bearing; they had been pruned by the Word of Christ, the Gospel. Have you been? This is where all spiritual fruitfulness begins.

B. Abiding in the Vine Is the Way to Bear Fruit (vv.4-8)

Jesus ends the first section of this passage by encouraging His disciples that they were already clean, meaning they were already saved. What is His next word for them? What does Jesus instruct them to do after learning that they were already connected to the vine? In a word, He tells them to *abide*. Jesus repeats this word seven times in the next four verses. Over and over again, repeatedly He’s telling us to abide in Him. That is the main point of this next section. However, what does it mean for us to abide in Him?

Well, the word for “*abide*” (*menō*: *men'-o*) means to stay (in a given place, state, relation, or expectancy); to continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, or tarry. We are to remain in Christ by faith. We are to dwell in Him by faith. We are to continue in Him, trusting in Him, submitting to and depending on Him just like the *first* moment that we placed faith in Him. There’s another biblical term used for this activity of the believer empowered by the Spirit that helps give the picture of what Christ is speaking of here; we are exhorted in many places to *hold fast* to what we have received.

- **Luke 8:15**—But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.
- **1 Corinthians 15:2**—By which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.
- **Hebrews 10:23**—Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.
- **Revelation 3:11**—I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

We are to tenaciously cling to Christ like a branch clings to a vine. That’s the picture that Christ gives in His illustration. That’s what He says in verse four; branches cannot bear fruit apart from the vine. Apart from the miracle of Aaron’s rod budding and growing ripe almonds (Num.17:1-8), there has never been fruit grown from a branch that is apart from a vine. It goes against nature. Branches need a vine to produce fruit. Everybody knows that. That’s why Jesus used this illustration. It’s an easy concept to understand. Anyone who has ever grown plants or even purchased store-bought flowers knows this is true. The minute a branch is removed from the vine, it is no longer able to bear fruit; the moment that the branch is cut off from the vine it dies. That is the idea behind this metaphor. We cannot bear spiritual fruit if we do not have God’s life flowing through us. We cannot bear fruit if we’re dead spiritually. That’s what Jesus is saying in verse four.

And He goes on to clarify and reaffirm what He’s saying by stating it again with an emphatic declaration in verse five. Jesus now draws His illustration into sharp focus and clarifies the players in His metaphor so

that his disciples understand exactly what He means. He says, *"I am the vine, you are the branches..."* There's no confusion here. Jesus explains the way things really are in just eight short words. What He means is that He is the source of our life. He is the trunk. He is the root. The life of God flows through Him to us. Without Him there is no life. Without Him we wither and die. Without Him we bear no fruit. Without Him we can do nothing.

And that's exactly what He tells us at the end of verse five. Certainly, this is true in a general sense, for the Bible says that *"in Him all things hold together"* (Col.1:17) and that *"in Him we live and move and exist"* (Acts 17:28); we cannot take our next breath unless He gives it to us. We depend on Him for even the smallest things, yet we don't realize it. However, in the context of our passage this statement made by Jesus speaks of *fruit bearing*. We will never bear spiritual fruit apart from Christ. It can't be done. No amount of good deeds, no amount of charitable works, and no amount of human kindness done *apart* from Christ will ever be considered fruit for God. Are these things good, humanly speaking? Of course they are, but if they're done apart from Christ and saving faith, then they're nothing that can be commended to God. In fact, Paul called his works *before* Christ rubbish (Phil.3:8). Isaiah said that all of *our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment* (Is.64:6). The only way for us to bear spiritual fruit is to be connected to the vine who is Christ.

However, what if you *don't* abide in Him? What if you drift away from Him or worse what if you are cut off from Him completely? Well, He covers that in the next verse. Verse six describes the fate of those who prove to be false branches that bear no fruit. Is it the fault of the vine that some branches do not bear fruit? Is it the fault of the vinedresser? No, verse six is very clear, it is the fault of the *branches* themselves. It says, *"If anyone does not abide in Me..."* It is a conscious choice these people make that they do not abide in Christ. They may come up close to Him like Judas Iscariot. They may even admire Him for His sacrifice or His teaching, but in the end, they do not remain in Him. They do not submit to Him or want Him as their King. And do you know what the scariest word is in that opening phrase? *Anyone*. *"Anyone."* That includes you. That includes me. That includes everyone reading or hearing this. You should be whispering a prayer in your heart right now, *"Lord, have mercy..."*

Now the sad and inevitable outcome of people who do not abide in Christ is that they are thrown away as a branch and they dry up. Do you know what the difference is between a branch and a stick? Both are made of some sort of wood, but that's where the similarity ends. A branch is still connected to the vine, a stick is not. A branch, because it is connected the vine, is still alive, a stick is not. A branch has the potential to bear fruit, a stick has lost that potential.

Sticks have many uses. They can be used as a staff for walking and hiking. They can be used in self-defense. They can be carved into ornate designs and you can do many other things with them. However, their *primary* purpose of bearing fruit for the vine can never be realized. They will never bear fruit because they are *dead*, being cut off from the vine, and that's the point. Since they do not abide in the vine and will not bear fruit, they are worthless to the vinedresser, so they are thrown away, they wither and dry up without life, and they are gathered and burned. This is God's divine judgment on those who do not remain in Christ. These are people who come close to the kingdom, but are never in. These are religious people, but they are not regenerate people. These are the Judas Iscariots of the world who suppose that being in the company of Christ is enough, but they fail to realize that they must be *in* Him. They must be connected to Him like a branch to a vine, depending on Him for their very existence. Do

these worthless branches describe you? If so, Christ is warning you about what will happen if you do not abide in Him. Trust Him today.

However, for those who have already trusted Him, for those who are abiding in Him and who are clinging to His Word, He makes an open-ended promise in verse seven. He turns from the dreadful outcome for those who do not abide to a great blessing for those who do. Verse seven is a blank check given to the faithful children of God to supply all of their spiritual needs! Do you need more joy in your life? Do you long to be more patient? Do you wish to grow in Christlikeness? Do you desire your family and friends to be saved? Christ says that if we are abiding in Him, we can ask whatever we wish and it will be done for us. Now of course the qualifier is that we are abiding in Him and His words are abiding in us, meaning that we are not going to be asking for pink Cadillacs or sacks of money, right? We are going to be asking for things that are in accordance with His will (*1 John 5:14*). He has given us a blank check to ask for the things that we *should* be asking for—our spiritual needs and not earthly lusts.

One thing that we see in verse eight that should be high on our prayer list is to be more fruitful. Jesus says that God the Father is glorified when we bear much fruit. We should be praying to be more fruitful. We want to see God glorified, amen? This is almost like God's signature on the blank check of prayer given in verse seven. God is jealous for His glory (*Is.42:8*) and if there's opportunity for Him to receive glory by our fruitfulness, it will be done. And by bearing fruit, we prove that we are His disciples. How do you know if you are abiding in the vine? How do you know if you are a true disciple? You *will* bear fruit.

I know most of you are probably thinking, what is this fruit that you keep talking about? John MacArthur says, "[It is] righteous attitudes, righteous longings, righteous desires, righteous affections, righteous virtues, and righteous behaviors. That is the manifestation of life; and where the life of God exists, the fruit must be there." What MacArthur is describing is the fruit of the Spirit (*Gal.5:22-23*): love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. In a word, the fruit that God is looking for is Christlikeness. What better way can we glorify God and prove to be Christ's disciples than by looking like Him?

C. Love Is the Way to Abiding (vv.9-11)

Jesus has told us that the way to fruitfulness, glorifying God, and proving to be His disciples is by abiding in Him and His words. However, what is the way to abiding? Exactly how do we abide in Him? The answer is simple, but very profound: **love**. Jesus admonishes us to remember His love for us and encourages us to show ours for Him.

First, He tells us that He has the same love for us that the Father has for Him. He reminds us of the pattern described elsewhere in scripture: "*We love, because He first loved us*" (*1 John 4:19*). His love for us always comes first. God is the initiator of the relationship we have with Him. It is not the other way around. Romans Chapter 3 tells us that we were not seeking God (*Rom.3:11*); He sought us and bought us with His blood just as the hymn says. We should never stop giving thanks about the fact that God loved us *first*! Amen?

Now we need to pause and reread that statement again. "*Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you...*" What? Wait, are you getting that? This, my friends, is another statement from the Word of God that is almost too good to believe. Christ loves you just like the Father loved Him? The question is: How has the Father loved Jesus?

A couple of chapters from now, Jesus prayed that His disciples might see the glory that God had given Him, for God “loved Him before the foundation of the world” (*John 17:24*). God audibly spoke from heaven twice saying that Jesus is His *beloved* Son, in whom He was well-pleased (*Matt.3:17, 17:5*). God affirmed Christ’s earthly ministry right from the very start at His Baptism and reiterated His approval at the Transfiguration. Isaiah—speaking prophetically about God’s Servant—said that He is the One in whom His soul *delights* (*Is.42:1*). God the Father and God the Son have shared a relationship of perfect love and communion from all eternity and that of a Father toward His *only Begotten Son*. We can also see something of the love spoken of here in the word selection used. The word used everywhere for love in verses nine and ten is of course (*agapē: ag-ah’-pay*), which again speaks of the love of the will. It is the highest form of love that always seeks the best for the object that it is bestowed upon. It is unconditional, irrevocable, and sacrificial love. This is how God has loved His son Jesus and this is how Jesus loves us.

John Gill offers the following quote on the love of Christ for us:

Christ loves us as His spouse and bride, as His dear children, as members of His body, as branches in Him the vine, as believers in Him, and followers of Him; which He has shown by espousing both their persons and cause, by assuming their nature, by suffering and dying in their room and stead, and making all suitable provision for them, both for time and eternity. And there is a likeness between the Father’s love to Him, and His love to his disciples and followers: as His Father loved Him from everlasting, so did He love them; as His Father loved Him with a love of complacency and delight, so did He, and so does He love them; and as His Father loved Him with a special and peculiar affection, with an unchangeable, invariable, constant love, which will last forever, in like manner does Christ love His people.¹

I think the simple chorus of the hymn that we usually reserve for Vacation Bible School says it best: *Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so*²... Jesus loves you, do you know it?

After focusing our attention on His love for us, He turns to our love for Him. He tells us to abide in His love and even tells us that the way to do that is to obey His commandments. Obedience is the proof of our love for Christ. It is the way that we abide in love with Him. He said earlier in this Discourse that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments (*John 14:15*). We don’t obey to try to earn God’s love, we obey because He first loved us (*1 John 4:19*) and His love has been poured out in our hearts (*Rom.5:5*), which we gladly return to Him in praise and worship.

The amazing thing about all of this is that Christ is completely *deserving* of the Father’s love since He was a *perfect* Son without sin (*Heb.4:15*) who fulfilled all righteousness (*Matt.3:15*); He *never* faltered in obedience to God. However, the same *cannot* be said of us. We have failed and continue to fail to obey God. Not one of us can say that we are without sin and if we try, we make God a liar (*1 John 1:10*) because He has said that none of us are good (*Rom.3:12*). We are completely undeserving of His great love. “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (*Eph.2:4-5*). Although we don’t deserve His love, Jesus compares God’s perfect love for Him to His love for us and His perfect obedience to the Father to our broken, faltering, and fumbling obedience as our way to abide in Him.

And the summary of it all is that Jesus wants to share His joy with us. It is the joy of service. It is the joy of obedience. Just as Jesus delighted to do the Father’s will and could say that He always did the things that

¹ John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Bible*, biblestudytools.com

² Anna Bartlett Warner, *Jesus Loves Me*

are pleasing to Him (*John 8:29*), Paul said it is our ambition to do the same—to be pleasing to Him (*2 Cor.5:9*). And it is by abiding in loving obedience that our joy is made full; in other words, doing what we were created for—obeying God—is the only way we will ever be *completely* satisfied in our souls.

Application:

So which type of branch are you? Are you bearing fruit for God? Are you growing in Christlikeness or is your life fruitless? If you claim to be a Christian, there should be fruit matching your profession, for where there is eternal life, there will be the fruit of the Spirit.

Are you a fruitful branch? Praise God. Are you being pruned? Don't despise the shears of your heavenly vinedresser. He only desires more fruit from your life, which ultimately glorifies Him and proves your discipleship leading to the important fruit of *assurance* for you.

Are you a fruitless branch? Christ has warned you about the outcome of remaining in that state. The good news is that you don't have to remain that way. God, the heavenly vinedresser, specializes in grafting in wild branches into the vine; you can be grafted into the vine today! Turn to Him today.

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