

CS – Famous Last Words

11/19/23

John 15:1-8

Sunday AM

This week I did a little research on *famous last words* from people many of us might consider famous.

- *I am at the mercy of fate and have no control over it* – Einstein
- *Why do you weep? Did you think I was immortal?* – King Louis 14th
- When asked if he had any final words – *Last words are for fools who haven't said enough* – Karl Marx
- *Hey... watch dis!* – Every Darwin Award Bubba
- *It's better to burn out than fade away* – Kurt Cobain
- *I have offended God and mankind b/c my work didn't reach the quality it should have* – da Vinci

And of course – the most famous/important last words ever uttered were by Jesus Christ – ***It is finished!***

I wonder... what do you think (or hope) would be your final words? Even more, if you knew you had less than 24 hrs to live – what would be the final truths/lessons you'd want to impart to your family/friends?

In **John 15**, as Jesus, and the now (11) disciples, were walking from the Upper Room to Gethsemane, Jesus offered His final instructions to the (11) where He declared that He was the True Vine and that to follow Him his disciples would need to learn to abide in Him.

I am the vine, and my Father is the gardener. He lifts up every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so it will be more fruitful. You are already clean b/c of the words I have spoken to you. Abide in me, as I also abide in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must abide in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; but apart from me, you can do nothing. If you do not abide in me, you are like a branch that's thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it'll be done for you. My Father is glorified by this: that you bear much fruit and prove to be my disciples. John 15:1-8

I The **PARTICIPANTS** of the Abiding Life

A The **VINE**

Jesus alone is the source of our spiritual lives. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit apart from the root, neither can a believer bear fruit independently of God. We must know Him as Savior and submit to Him as Lord.

B The **GARDENER**

The Gardener is ***God the Father*** – who tends our lives to provide the nurture/care necessary for our lives to produce the greatest harvest possible.

C The **BRANCHES**

We are the branches – called to produce the fruit of God to the world around us. God lovingly cultivates our lives by attending to our *attitudes, ambitions, and actions* to ensure we're exposed to His love/truth.

In this text, Jesus was telling the (11) and anyone else who'd ever follow Him about the necessity of abiding. Yet to discover the abiding life, we need to recognize the basic condition of people (see **Diagram**).

LOST		S A L V A T I O N	FOUND	
REBELLIOUS	RELIGIOUS		FLESH-LED	SPIRIT-LED
A person who has not trusted Christ and who lives in rebellion towards God unconcerned about their faith	A person who believes in God but trusts in their religion or good works instead of in Jesus for salvation	S U R R E N D E R	A person who has trusted Christ as Savior but attempts to live the Christian Life in their own abilities and goodness	A person who has trusted Christ as Savior and lives under the influence of the Holy Spirit bearing the fruit of the Spirit
S P I R I T U A L				

There are (2) kinds of people – those who are **lost** and those who are **found**. Those who don't know Jesus as Savior and those who do. What separates the lost from the found is their genuine belief/trust in the cross.

As in the Parable of the Prodigal Son – there are (2) kinds of **lost** people – those who are *rebellious* towards God (younger son) and those who are *religious* yet unwilling to put their trust in God (older son)

There are (2) kinds of **found** people – those who've believed in Christ as Savior but who attempt to live the Christian life in their *good flesh*, and those who've surrendered to the *abiding life* who live the Christian life in God's ability thru the Holy Spirit

Truth – the *abiding life* only is the Christian life – and anything less is less than God's desire for His people.

II The **PRIORITY** of the Abiding Life

This brings us to the priority of the abiding life – it's to abide... to get connected and to live submitted.

To **abide** (*meno*) is to remain connected to or plugged into the source. To dwell in or live with closely.

The *abiding life* is a life that's submitted/surrendered to God's Word/will – It's a life that's plugged into, aligned with, and empowered by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of seeking first God's Kingdom/righteousness.

Example – **Tony Evans Refrigerator Story**

Point – the Christian life requires an outside source to power it. It doesn't run on *flesh* or on *batteries* – but on the Holy Spirit in us living thru us. Meaning – it is impossible to live the Christian life without the Holy Spirit

This is exactly what Paul prayed for the Colossians:

*We ask God to **fill** you with the knowledge of His will thru all the wisdom/understanding that only the Holy Spirit gives so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father... Colossians 1:9-12*

He prayed that they'd **abide in Vine**. B/c the **ONLY** way to walk worthy of the Lord to please Him in every way is by being powered from the outside/in by another source (namely the Holy Spirit).

Meaning – for the Christian, there's nothing more crucial in one's faith than learning to abide in the Vine.

III The **POINT** of the Abiding Life

This brings us to the point of the abiding life – *it's to bear the character of Christ and the fruit of the Holy Spirit*

NOW – I realize that what I'm about to say is both counter-intuitive/counter-culture but DYK that God's priority objective for your life is NOT that you are **successful** but that you are **fruitful**. Look at v. 8

My Father is glorified by this: that you bear much fruit and prove to be my disciples. John 15:8

LME – in God's economy, true *success* is not measured by what we attain in the eyes of people, but by how our lives bear the nature/character of Jesus.

This is why Isaiah said – *all of our righteous deeds are like filthy rags*. It's b/c true God-honoring fruit can't be produced by human ability, ingenuity, or morality, but only displayed by the Holy Spirit in us living thru us.

Meaning – our fruitfulness has everything to do with **WHO** we are due to the Holy Spirit in us and nothing to do with **WHAT** we can do in our good flesh.

SEE – while we can be moral and do good things in our flesh we cannot **produce** the fruit of the Spirit – only the Holy Spirit can produce this kind of fruit. But, as a conduit of His grace, when we are *abiding in the Vine*, we will **display** the fruit of God's nature/character.

You could say – *the proof is in the pudding?* For when we abide in the Vine – **the proof is in our fruit** – b/c the fruit of our character/actions serves as an outward demonstration of our inward transformation.

A branch is just a grape rack God has to hang His fruit on. My responsibility isn't to produce the fruit – but to be available for God to hang and display His fruit for others to see and experience. *Ron Dunn*

IV The **PRUNING** of the Abiding Life

This brings up a final aspect to the abiding life – and it's how the Father attends our lives for greater growth.

LWF – the abiding life is always about our intimacy and dependence on God so that we're empowered to live and exhibit Jesus in us to the world around us.

PROBLEM is – while we might be saved, salvation doesn't guarantee intimacy/fruitfulness but rather only our surrender to abide. This is b/c we still have to deal with our flawed flesh, a fallen world, and a fierce adversary who's working to kill, steal, and destroy.

So, God is constantly at work in our lives to weed out and prune anything that hinders our relationship with Him or helps us to thrive so that we're more fruitful.

He lifts up every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so it will be more fruitful. v. 2

airo – to lift up in the air or to raise

In his book, *the Secrets of the Vine*, Wilkerson explains that new branches have a natural tendency to trail down and grow along the ground, and therefore, are unable to produce fruit b/c the leaves get coated with dust, mud, and mildew stagnating fruitfulness – causing the branches becomes sick/useless.

So, God, understanding the value of the new growth, doesn't cut off the new growth but attends to it b/c it's much too valuable and its potential too abundant. Instead, he lovingly lifts/cleans the leaves and then attaches them to the trellis of His grace to expose the believer to the air/sunlight so they can begin to thrive.

For the Christian, sin is like dirt covering our branches stagnating fruitfulness – impeding truth/love from nurturing our lives. So, God takes us thru a gentle and loving process to clean us up to cultivate us.

Don't Miss – the pruning/lifting process is ALWAYS intended to nudge us lovingly toward the abiding life, the character of Jesus, and greater fruitfulness for His glory. *It's never to push us away but to draw us near – drawing us to surrender/dependence.*

You could say the *abiding life* is our full surrender to knowing and trusting Jesus as Savior/Lord.

In September 1862, at the battle of Munfordville, KY, Col. John Wilder found himself outnumbered 6/1 to Gen. Braxton Bragg's Confederate forces. Wilder was an Indiana lawyer with little combat experience, yet was confronted with the decision b/w surrendering or fighting. Realizing what was at stake, he believed he needed sound professional advice – even if it came from his enemy. So, waving a white flag, Wilder entered the Bragg's Confederate camp to ask renowned Maj. Gen. Simon Buckner for counsel. Buckner, instead of helping him, referred him to Gen. Bragg – who invited Wilder to count the number of cannons trained on his forces. Wilder stopped counting at (46) and said, "I believe I will surrender." Later, Maj. Gen. Buckner was asked why he didn't offer his advice and he said, "I wouldn't have deceived that man under those circumstances for anything."

I'm not sure how long waving a white flag has been a sign of surrender, but I know there are times when surrender is one's only plausible course of action. But unlike this account during the War b/w the State, my waving the white flag is NOT yielding to the enemy or asking for his counsel. Rather, it's my signaling to God that I no longer have it within me, nor have I ever had it within me, to live life without his Divine intervention.

When it comes to following Jesus and living life – the only plausible decision is my daily surrender to abide.

LISTEN – the abiding life is the essential lesson of the Christian life – b/c it is impossible to live the Christian life apart from being in alignment with, plugged into, and powered by the Holy Spirit

To *abide* – requires our constant willingness to yield and depend on God in every area of our lives.

Are you abiding – or are you trying to live life all on your own?