

Message Three

Abiding in Christ the True Vine for Fruit-bearing

Scripture Reading: John 14:23; 15:1-2, 4-5, 7-8, 12, 16-17; 1 John 3:24; 4:13, 15

I. The true vine with its branches—Christ the Son with the believers in the Son—is the organism of the Triune God in the divine economy to grow with His riches and express His life—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 3:9; John 15:1, 5a:

- A. The function of the true vine as a sign of the Son is for the Triune God to have an organism in the Son for His multiplication, spreading, and glorification in His divine life—vv. 8, 16.
- B. The Father as the husbandman is the source and the founder; God the Son is the center, the embodiment, and the manifestation; God the Spirit is the reality and realization; and the branches are the Body, the corporate expression—vv. 1, 4-5, 26.
- C. The organism of the Triune God in John 15 is the Triune God united, mingled, and incorporated with His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people—14:20.
- D. The goal of God's economy is this enlarged, universal, divine-human incorporation of the consummated God with the regenerated believers.

II. As the true vine, Christ is the center of God's operation in the universe—v. 1; Col. 1:15-18; 2:9; 3:4, 11:

- A. The entire universe is a vineyard, and centered in this vineyard is the true vine, which is Christ the Son; everything that God the Father is and has is for this center, is embodied in this center, and is expressed through this center—John 15:1; 1:18; 3:35; 16:15; 17:10.
- B. The true vine—the center of God's operation in the universe—is for the propagation and multiplication of life—15:5, 8, 16:
- C. To propagate life is to spread life widely, and to multiply life is to reproduce life.—10:10; 12:24; 15:16.
- D. When the life of the vine is expressed through the branches in its propagation and multiplication, the Father is glorified, because what the Father is in the riches of His life is expressed in the propagation and multiplication of the vine; this is the glorification of the Father—vv. 4-5, 8.

III. We need to be brought into a full realization of the fact that we all are branches of the universal vine—John 15:2, 4-5:

- A. We have become branches of the vine, members of Christ, by the branching out of the vine; when we believed in the Lord Jesus, He branched into us—3:15.
- B. For us to be a branch means that Christ has become our life—Col. 3:4.
- C. Christ as the vine does everything through His believers as the branches; without Him we can do nothing, and without us He can do nothing; we need Him, and He needs us—John 15:4-5.
- D. Our destiny as branches of the universal vine is to bear fruit for the glorification of the Father; this God-appointed destiny is fulfilled by the practice of the God-ordained way to carry out God's New Testament economy—John 15:16.

IV. As branches in the vine, we need to abide in the vine—John 15:4-5:

- A. To be in the Lord is a matter of union; to abide in the Lord is a matter of fellowship—1 Cor. 1:9, 30.
- B. Our abiding in Christ as the vine depends on our seeing a clear vision that we are branches in the vine; once we see that we are branches in the vine, we need to maintain the fellowship between us and the Lord—John 15:2; Hymns, #561.
- C. We abide in Christ as the vine by living in the mingled spirit—John 15:4-5; 1 Cor. 6:17.

- D. Apart from the vine, we are nothing, we have nothing, and we can do nothing—John 15:5b.
- E. Only when the branches abide in the vine can the vine be everything to them.

V. We abide in Christ so that He may abide in us by loving Him—John 14:21, 23:

- A. When we love the Lord Jesus, He manifests Himself to us, and the Father comes with Him to make an abode with us for our enjoyment; this abode is a mutual abode, in which the Triune God abides in us and we abide in Him—v. 23.
- B. The more we love the Lord, the more we shall have His presence, and the more we are in His presence, the more we shall enjoy all that He is to us—1 Cor. 2:9-10; Eph. 6:24.

VI. We abide in Christ so that He may abide in us by dealing with the constant word in the Scriptures, which is outside of us, and the present word as the Spirit, which is within us—John 5:39-40; 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6; Rev. 2:7:

- A. By the outward, written word we have the explanation, definition, and expression of the mysterious Lord, and by the inward, living word we have the experience of the abiding Christ and the presence of the practical Lord—Eph. 5:26; 6:17-18.
- B. If we abide in the Lord's constant word and written word, His instant and living words will abide in us—John 8:31; 15:7; 1 John 2:14.

VII. To abide in the Lord as the true vine is to abide in His love—John 15:9-10:

- A. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"—John 13:34-35:
 - 1. If we love one another, we do not need to tell people that we are the Lord's disciples; the worldly people will realize this.
 - 2. If we do not know one another, we cannot love one another; the more we know one another in the proper way, the more we will love one another.
- B. "This is My commandment, that you love one another even as I have loved you...These things I command you that you may love one another"—15:12, 17 and footnote 1:
 - 1. This is to love one another in the Lord's life, the divine life, in the Lord's love, and in His commission of fruit-bearing.
 - 2. Life is the source, love is the condition, and fruit-bearing is the goal; if we all live by the Lord's life as the source, in the Lord's love as the condition, and for fruit-bearing as the goal, we surely will love one another.
- C. "Love one another warmly in brotherly love"—Rom. 12:10a.

VIII. Effective prayers are the issue of our abiding in the Lord as the vine and of His words abiding in us—John 15:7:

- A. Prayer is man cooperating and co-working with God, allowing God to express Himself through man and thus accomplish His purpose; a praying one will cooperate with God, work together with God, and allow God to express Himself and His desire from within him and through him—Rom. 8:26-27; James 5:17:
 - 1. Prayer is the flowing between man and God and the mutual contact between man and God.
 - 2. We need the kind of prayer that brings us into contact with the Lord, prayer that causes us to be one with Him in our spirit—2 Tim. 4:22; 1 Cor. 6:17.
- B. When we abide in the Lord, and His words abide in us, there will be a desire in us that comes out of His words—John 15:7; 1 John 5:14-15:
 - 1. We will touch the Lord's feeling and understand His intention; then spontaneously, we will have His desire in us.

2. His desire will become our desire, what He wants will be what we want, and we will pray according to this desire.
3. The Lord will answer this kind of prayer because it issues from our abiding in the Lord and from His words abiding in us.

IX. The Christian life is a life of abiding in the Lord—1 John 2:6, 27-28; 3:24; 4:13, 15:

- A. As long as we abide in Christ, the other experiences of the normal Christian life will automatically follow; our unique need is to abide in Christ—John 15:4-5:
 1. It is in and by abiding that we have the genuine holiness, spirituality, and victory over sin, the world, Satan, our flesh, and the self; it is in and by abiding that we become practical members of the Body of Christ; and it is in and by abiding that we live the normal Christian life and church life.
 2. When we are abiding in the vine, we have no problems, because we are one with the Son of God, who has conquered every enemy and dealt with every negative thing; when we abide in the Lord, we lack nothing, and we need to do nothing other than enjoy what He has accomplished, because all that He has accomplished becomes our experience when we are one with Him.
- B. “Abide in Christ—this highest blessing gain; / Each day sweet fellowship with Him maintain. / Abiding, He and we are joined as one / In constant fellowship, all barriers gone”—The Collected Works of Witness Lee, Bible Notes & Hymns, vol. 4, p. 443.