

JOHN

Stories Related To The Last Days Of Christ

March 03, 2019

I. Introduction

A. **John 15:6-14** . . . “**If** anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. [7] **If** you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. [8] My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. [9] Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. [10] **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. [11] These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. [12] This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. [13] Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. [14] You are My friends **if** you do what I command you.”

B. Prayer

II. Not abiding in the Vine results in loss, abiding results in blessings

A. **John 15:6** . . . **If** anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

1. I think we could agree that this statement is alluding to truths concerning one's salvation and eternal destiny. However, given the other things I want to cover today, I will confine myself to the branch that is **NOT ABIDING** in the vine – who is Jesus Christ.
2. Given the context of **John 15**, it seems the most natural and logical understanding of not abiding in Christ is to either be separated from Christ or to be attached to the Vine yet not drawing life from the Christ.
 - a. When we add the larger context **John 1-14** to these first verses in **John 15**, it is most likely Jesus is referring to religious unbelievers who consider themselves believers – whether they be the religious, yet unbelieving Jews of Jesus' day, or the religious, yet unbelieving church attenders of our day who consider themselves Christians in good standing with God.
3. The point here is that people can be serious about their religion and religious practices yet still not know anything of a life affecting faith

in God, and a life changing interaction with the Word of God, and a meaningful relationship with God.

- a. We see an example of this in **Matthew 7:21-23**, where Jesus says that not everyone who calls Him “Lord” and participates in spiritual activities will enter the kingdom of heaven. Only those who do the will of God (*which is the natural outcome of abiding in the Vine*) will enter.
 - b. We find another example of the religious, yet unbelieving person in **Matthew 8:10-12**, where Jesus says that those who believe in Him and live accordingly (*which again is the natural outcome of abiding in Him*) will be in the kingdom of heaven, while those who consider themselves in good standing with God yet do not live as those who abide in Christ, will be cast out into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 - c. And my final example is found in **Matthew 22:11-13**, where Jesus told a parable about a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man who **was not dressed** in wedding clothes (*an example of being in the right place at the right time, but not abiding in the Vine*). So the king said to him, “Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?” And the man was speechless. Then the king said to His servants, “Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
4. The point here is simple. There has been and will continue to be serious minded, zealous, self-disciplined religious unbelievers. In Jesus day they identified as a “Jew,” and in our day they identify as a “Christian.”
 - a. These religious unbelievers think they are attached to the vine and therefore in good standing with God. But they aren’t.
 - b. And what Jesus is telling us in **John 15:6**, is that this kind of defective thinking, this kind of faulty understanding of God and His word, this kind of flawed self-assessment, is fatal.
- B. **John 15:7-8** . . . **If** you abide in Me, and **[if]** My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. [8] My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.
1. We looked at a similar statement back in **John 14:12-14**, where Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because

I go to the Father. [13] Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. [14] If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.”

2. I am reminding you of this passage from **John 14** for two reasons.
 - a. **First**, when we studied those verses, I pointed out that the larger context of **John 14**, and statements found in **John 5, 6, 12, & 16**, along with other scriptures found in the Old and New Testaments, show that God does not and will not give us or do whatever we ask in Jesus name. God’s answer to any prayers must fit into boundaries He determines, not us.
 - b. **Second**, the immediate context in **John 14** and the context here in **John 15** are similar. Both have to do with seeking God’s help in being active on God’s behalf **for the glory of God**.
 - (1) In **John 14**, the activity was doing similar or greater works than Jesus did, **for the glory of God**.
 - (2) Here in **John 15**, the activity is bearing the kind of fruit (*which can only happen as we abide in the Vine*) **that brings glory to God**.
 3. The truth I want to impress on us today is that we live the best Christian life possible when we intentionally and persistently (1) do what is necessary to abide in the Vine, (2) and pray for God’s wisdom, insight, and empowerment, (3) and to seek the best understanding of His will and word possible – for the purpose of bearing fruit **that brings God glory**.
 4. Or to say this in a shorter way, there is no better way to live than for the glory of God.
- C. **John 15:9-10** . . . “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. [10] **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.”
1. If – as it is commonly taught today – that God loves us unconditionally, and if God has demonstrated His love for us by sending Jesus to the cross on our behalf while we were still in rebellion against Him, why would Jesus tell us to abide in His love?
 - a. In other words, is abiding in His love up to us?
 - b. After all, if He loves us unconditionally, doesn’t that mean our abiding in His love is totally up to Him?
 2. But there is more to consider, for after exhorting us to abide in His love, Jesus tells us that the way to abide in His love is to keep His

commandments. And Jesus confirms the necessity of keeping His commandments in order to abide in His love by reminding us that He, himself, had to live according to this same requirement.

- a. However, if God loves us unconditionally, why would we need to keep His commandments to abide in His love?
 - b. Is it possible we have a misguided or even self-serving understanding of God's love? I think so.
 - c. Our tendency is to want to feel safe in God's love regardless of how live. And so we tend to talk about God's love in ways that imply His love is expressed in the same ways whether we are living according to the word of God or living according to the ways of the world and the sinful desires of our flesh.
3. You see, it is the love of God that takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked – a death which results in eternal damnation and separation from God (**Ezekiel 18:23, 32**).
- a. It is the love of God that expressed toward His children in these words in **Isaiah 1:4-7**, “Alas, sinful nation, people weighed down with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who act corruptly! You have abandoned the LORD, you have despised the Holy One of Israel, you have turned away from Him. [5] Where will you be stricken again, as you continue in your rebellion? Your whole head is sick and your whole heart is faint. [6] From the sole of the foot even to the head there is nothing sound in it, only bruises, welts and raw wounds, not pressed out or bandaged, nor softened with oil. [7] Your land is desolate, your cities are burned with fire, your fields—strangers are devouring them in your presence.”
 - b. It is the love of God which raised up the Babylonians and enabled them to defeat Israel and carry the Israelites away from their land into captivity.
 - c. It is the love of God that disciplines His children who take communion in an unworthy manner – even to the point of physical weakness, sickness, and death (**1 Corinthians 11:30-32**).
 - d. It is the love of God which exhorts us to strengthen those areas of our lives that are spiritually weak so that God does not have to bring worse trouble or hardship or sickness into our lives in order to get our attention, and to promote repentance, so that we head in a godly direction (**Hebrews 12:12-13**).
 - e. **And I could go on**, but this should be enough for you to seriously consider this question: “Is this the side or part or expression of God's love that you want to experience?”

4. Could it be that Jesus is exhorting us to abide in His love – just as He has abided in His Father’s love, and that He gives us the way to do this – which is to keep His commandments, so that we abide in that side or part or expression of God’s love that blesses us with life that is abundant? I think so!
 5. You see, God is a loving father, and like any loving father, He would rather pour out the blessings of love rather than the disciplines and punishments of love. And so He tells that the way to abide in His love is to keep His commandments – just as Jesus did.
- D. With this idea of God’s desire to pour out the blessings of love rather than the punishments of love fresh in your mind, I want to conclude our teaching time today by pointing out three conditional “**IF**’s” and their promised blessings as found here in **John 15**. And as we have time, I will add several more blessings promised in **John 14**. My purpose is to remind you of God’s great kindness and goodness to those who live according to His will and word and in so doing, abide in His love. For you see, these blessings are a fulfilling and satisfying part of the abundant life which Jesus give us.
1. The three conditional “**IF**’s” are:
 - a. **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.
 - b. **John 15:10** . . . **If** you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love.
 - c. **John 15:14** . . . You are My friends **if** you do what I command you.
 2. **John 15:7** – Imagine pursuing godliness in a way and to the extent that you grow to the place of being so in tune with God that whatever you are convinced is needed for dealing with a person or situation in the most godly way possible, you receive in response to prayer.
 - a. And what a marvelous blessing this is – not just for you, but for those people you are directly dealing with, and for those people who are effected by or just observing how you deal with a particular situation.
 - b. You see, this is an example of righteousness spreading its goodness beyond the person who is righteous to those who are effected by the righteous persons choices and behavior.
 3. **John 15:10** – Imagine not just knowing intellectually or theologically that God loves you, but knowing it personally and experientially. You see, when we make an honest effort to live according to the will and

word of God in all areas of life (*which in essence is keeping His commandments*), it results in gaining a holiness of life whereby the unholy junk in you becomes so minimal that you are able to taste, touch, feel, and experientially know the love of God for you.

- a. It is this kind of knowing God's love that brings tears of joy and gratitude to your eyes when singing, "Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made, were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade, to write the love of God above, would drain the ocean dry. Nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky."
 - b. And it is this depth of joy and gratitude which is a blessing beyond any temporal or worldly blessing.
 - c. For me, the closest I come to it in earthly love is the love of Barbie, my children, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren. And though their love has brought tears of joy and gratitude to my eyes, God's love is still a greater blessing and a greater treasure – for it fulfills and satisfies far beyond what any earthly love can do.
4. **John 15:14** – Imagine going from being a slave of the Master to being His friend. Imagine going from having to obey the Master's commands without explanation to being in the inner circle where you are told **the what and why** of what your Friend is saying and doing. Imagine going from being property or so indebted you are treated as property to being considered such a close friend that you are treated as one of the family. What a blessing!
5. And each of these blessings are yours to have "IF" you will make an honest effort to fulfill the conditions.
- a. You see, God wants to bless you. He wants you to be happy. He wants you to feel safe and secure.
 - b. He wants you to feel loved and to be convinced – experientially – that you are loved. He wants you to know the undescribable joy of His presence, and of intimate fellowship with Him.
6. However, though He hands these blessings out freely, He does not hand them out unconditionally.
- a. For example, the first blessing mentioned requires abiding in Him and having His word abide in you. The second blessing requires keeping His commandments. And the third blessing requires doing what He commands you to do.
 - b. And yet, though you may remain imperfect until your death, if you will make an honest, commendable effort to fulfill God's conditions, He will pour out His blessings upon you.

- c. And what is more, the value of the blessings will always exceed the cost of fulfilling the conditions to such a degree that once you are enjoying the blessings, the conditions will seem like a blessing, too, for it is the conditions that bring you into that place of receiving these wonderful blessings.
- E. I said that if we have time, I would add several more blessings promised in **John 14**. In previous teachings, we have looked at the one's I will mention today, so I will be brief.
1. **John 14:15-17** . . . If we will love God and keep His commandments, He will bless us with the indwelling presence and work of the Holy Spirit. And is He not the Immanuel of our day now that Jesus is gone? The Holy Spirit is God with us, in reality and in person. Could there be a greater blessing than that?
 2. **John 14:21** . . . If we will keep God's commandments, we will be loved by God, and Jesus will disclose himself to us. Imagine having such a meaningful and intimate relationship with God and His son, Jesus Christ, that it is like being with them in person, and that it results in an understanding of them and their ways that goes human reasoning. This is not just a blessing of information. It is a blessing of understanding and seeing in ways that calms your mind and assures your heart that you are loved and cared for even in the worst of life's circumstances.
 3. **John 14:23** . . . If we will love God and live according to His word, He will not only love us, but He will also make His home in us. Imagine, knowing experientially that God is dwelling in you and communing with you. This blessing is beyond anything you can imagine to be a superior or supreme type of blessing. Yet this is what God wants to give us and bless us with.

III. Conclusion

- A. I believe the words of **John 15:11** provide an apt conclusion to all that we have talked about today. In **vs 11**, Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."