

DON'T WHINE ABOUT THE VINE!

Ye shall *KNOW* them by their *FRUITS*. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every *GOOD TREE* bringeth forth *GOOD FRUIT*; but a *CORRUPT TREE* bringeth forth *EVIL FRUIT*. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and *CAST INTO THE FIRE*. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall *KNOW* them. -- Matt. 7:16-20

And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth *GOOD FRUIT* is hewn down, and *CAST INTO THE FIRE*. -- Matt. 3:10

But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father *HATH NOT PLANTED*, shall be *ROOTED UP*. -- Matt. 15:13

I am the *TRUE* vine, and my Father is the husbandman. — John 15:1

There are two different trees parabolically taught by our Lord, the evil, false professing, tree and the good, true, *FRUIT BEARING* tree. The true tree in John 15 is explained as either having fruit or *NO* fruit as opposed to the evil fruit of this corrupt tree and the demand to it for good fruit. Unlike the true tree teaching, the parabolic “Corrupt Tree” presents the *WHOLE TREE CORRUPT*, and *GOOD FRUIT* is demanded from this tree, which produces evil fruit. The corrupt tree is nothing short of *FALSE PROFESSION* and false propheting and concerns itself with unbelievers pretending to be believers. The Father did not *PLANT* these *PLANTS* or *TREES*, which must be cut down, plucked up, and burned. Unlike these the *TREES* that God did not plant, the believing *BRANCHES of the TRUE VINE* are planted by the heavenly Father, whose branches bring forth only good fruit or else no fruit, and is not cut down or plucked up.

The Audience

The fact that both the saved and unsaved were most likely present in this audience in that Judas had not yet been exposed as a false, non-abiding, professing branch, who never had abided in Christ. Such an audience demands that the general *COMMAND to ABIDE IN HIM* applies to both the saved and the unsaved here. Obviously, the false professor Judas could also be commanded to *ABIDE* in him, having not yet done so but Judas could *NEVER* be told to “continue” to abide in Him or to remain in Him. The saved, who already were *IN HIM* (Christ) in some way, are commanded to abide *IN HIM* in both the Gospels and the epistles. New Testament Christians are told to *ABIDE IN HIM* or else suffer shame and lack of confidence (1 John 2:28). Then there is the passage (1 John 3:6), which tells us that anyone, who *ABIDETH* in Him, *SINNETH NOT*. Let Baptist Purgatory heretics get a hold on that one.

The True Vine's and its Branches

I am the *TRUE* vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch *IN ME* that beareth *NOT* fruit he *TAKETH WAY*: and every branch that beareth *FRUIT*, he *PURGETH* it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are *CLEAN through the WORD* which I have spoken unto you. Abide *IN ME*, and *I IN YOU*. As the branch *CANNOT* bear *OF ITSELF, EXCEPT IT ABIDE* in the vine; no more can ye, except ye *ABIDE IN ME* I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth *IN ME*, and *I IN HIM*, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for *WITHOUT ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING*. *IF* a man *ABIDE NOT IN ME*, he is *CAST FORTH AS A BRANCH*, and is *WITHERED*; and *MEN* gather them, and *CAST* them into the *FIRE*, and they are *BURNED*. If ye *ABIDE IN ME*, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my *DISCIPLES*. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue in my love. If ye *KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS*, ye shall *ABIDE* in my *LOVE*; *EVEN* as I have kept my Father's *COMMANDMENTS*, and *ABIDE* in his *LOVE*. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your *JOY* might be *FULL*. -- John 15:1- 11

Jesus is symbolically represented in this parable as the *TRUE VINE TREE* as opposed to the *LOST FALSE, CORRUPT TREES* [Matt. 3:10; 7:16-20; 15:13], having false and corrupt branches, which were preached against by Jesus and John the Baptist. Nevertheless, this Jesus tree is the *TRUE* one. It follows that the True Vine's branches are *TRUE BRANCHES* as well. Here, branches are placed into three categories: (1.) true believers, who bear fruit, branches that abide in Christ, (2.) true believers, who do not bear fruit, branches that abide in Christ (*IN ME*), and (3.) unbelievers, who are not true branches of this tree, who have never abided in Christ. The true believers are *IN CHRIST (IN ME)* and are *CLEAN THROUGH HIS WORD*. They are symbolically represented as the true branches of that *TRUE VINE* tree.

So, we have here, (1.) true believers, true, fruit bearing branches that bear fruit and are purged to bring forth more fruit. (2.) true believers, non fruit-bearing true branches, who may once have brought forth fruit but no longer do so, are *TAKEN AWAY*. If they already were *NOT* abiding in the vine, how could they be *TAKEN AWAY* from the vine (something that cannot be said of unbeliever Judas, who never was in the True Vine? (3.) non-abiding branches, which do not belong to the true vine, which are worthless, dead, imposter branches.

Jesus tells this audience that the true branches, who abide in Him (*IN ME*), are *CLEAN*. Overly dispensational and invisible church brethren cannot be very happy with such a situation. For how did these O.T. saints (at that time) get *CLEAN*, since Christ had not yet died nor arose? They became *CLEAN THROUGH CHRIST'S WORD*. So, not only do we

have saints *IN HIM* but we have *CLEAN* saints *IN HIM* in the four Gospels.

Also, overly dispensational brethren must needs be disappointed at all these branches being *IN CHRIST*, for that is not supposed to happen *BEFORE* the cross. Of course, Baptist Purgatory heretics and lose your salvationists delight in trying to *FORCE* believers into hell and the lake of fire.

The Purpose of Abiding

If one positionally “abides” *IN CHRIST* by the new birth, he is practically admonished and instruction to abide in Him for discipleship, fruit bearing, to enable their prayers to be answered, and for full joy. It also enables them to bear much fruit—not to obtain nor even to keep their salvation or eternal life status nor their escape from hell status. The purpose of this parable is fruit bearing *NOT* salvation or any escape from the Lake of Fire. The instruction to Christians to *ABIDE* in Christ is for the purposes of fruit bearing, for they are incapable of doing anything in or by themselves, except they abide in Him (per both the Gospels and the Epistles). This word “*ABIDE*” in this parable is a curious word with a wide latitude of usage in that it may mean, depending on the context, remain, tarry, continue, dwell (where we get the word “*ABODE*”), and so forth. Its interpretation is *KEY* to this whole passage. Depending on how one manipulates this word, one may read various meanings *INTO* this passage. The word *ABIDE* and *ABODE* (in the sense of dwell) can even be used in the future sense in that some were told to abide, not yet having reached that destination (Luke 19:5; 24:29; Acts 16:15). “He that eateth my flesh . . . dwelleth in me . . .” (John 6:5, 6)

Jesus promises that He and the Father will make their future *ABODE* with them under certain conditions (John 14:23). The word “*DWELL*” is often synonymously substituted for the word “*ABIDE*” by the KJB translators (John 6:5, 6; 1 John 3:17, 24; 4:12, 13, 15, 16; 2 John 2; Acts 28:16). Of course, the “lose your salvationist” crowd would like it to mean “stay,” continue, or remain *IN CHRIST* so that it appears that you can lose salvation or no hell status.

The Lose Your Salvation and Baptist Purgatory Advocates

Now, notice that nothing was said in John 15 about the lake of fire and nothing was said about hell and nothing was said about the Judgment seat of Christ, which Jesus’ audience did not even know existed. Granted, the word “fire” is used, but if the fire in this parable is hell, it is the only place where “*MEN*” throw the unsaved (or the saved that used to be saved or who lost their no hell status) into hell (depending on the false teachers’ view). The false branches are not in the vine and are said not to abide in Christ and said to be taken by *MEN* to be burned. Note that they are cast forth “*AS*” a branch. This is a direct application to Judas, who never was clean nor ever was in Christ. Note that the man that abides not in Christ is *NOT* a “true” branch that is cast forth; he is a “false” branch that is *CAST* forth “*AS*” a branch. He only seems like a true branch. Big difference! He is from the corrupt tree.

If you can lose your position *IN CHRIST* and lose your *ETERNAL LIFE* status and lose your no-hell status, then a man can be *IN CHRIST* and then get *OUT* of Christ and be lost. We reject such an *INFERENCE*, which is based merely on innuendo, using and manipulating a nuance of language. Nevertheless, if the non-abiding are allowed to apply to Judas, who *DID NOT ABIDE IN CHRIST* nor ever had dwelled in Him, then the problem is solved. Baptist Purgatory heretics insist that this means that carnal, saved, believers are cast into hell and the lake of fire. Yet, are they willing to also insist that those carnal believers are no longer *IN CHRIST* during that time (1000 years)?

Abiding in His Love versus Abiding in Christ

New Testament saints are *responsible for KEEPING* themselves in the love of God (Jude 21), but they are not responsible for keeping their salvation. Only He that saves to the *UTTERMOST* can *KEEP* their salvation and their exemption from hell status. Obviously, once in Christ positionally, one cannot get out of Christ in the sense of the new creature being lost, but one can stop abiding in His love. It goes without saying that Jesus Christ kept His Father’s *COMMANDMENTS* and so *ABIDED* in His *LOVE*, without any need of salvation or need to keep salvation. This is further commentary on *ABIDING IN CHRIST*, namely, *ABIDING in His LOVE*. We must keep *CHRIST’S COMMANDMENTS* to *ABIDE* in His *LOVE* (in contradistinction to the *LAW’S COMMANDMENTS*). This is all about discipleship, fruit bearing, and *FULL JOY* remaining in the believer—not about hell or salvation.

It is a very weak position that hides behind the veil of a parable in order to promote one’s doctrine. Obviously, a complex parable is not the final word on any doctrine, either pro or con. Moreover, all the details of a parable are not always symbolic of something as demonstrated by “men” throwing the branches in the fire as opposed to angels. Nevertheless, like the actor said, “A man ought to know his limitations” . . . when he interprets or reads things into such parables.

-- By Herb Evans